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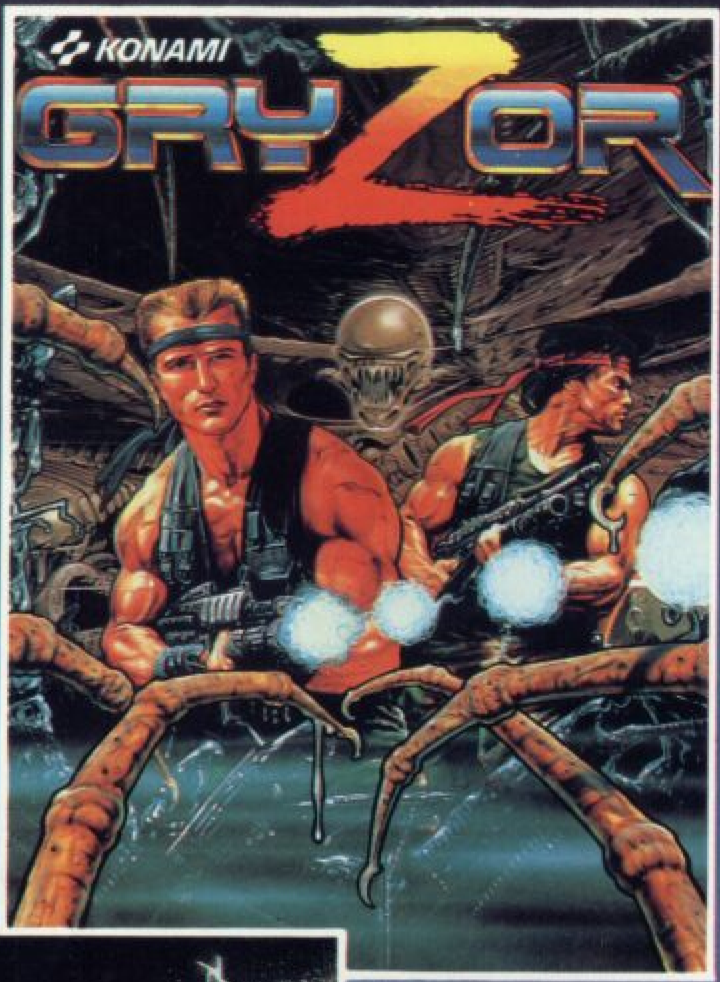
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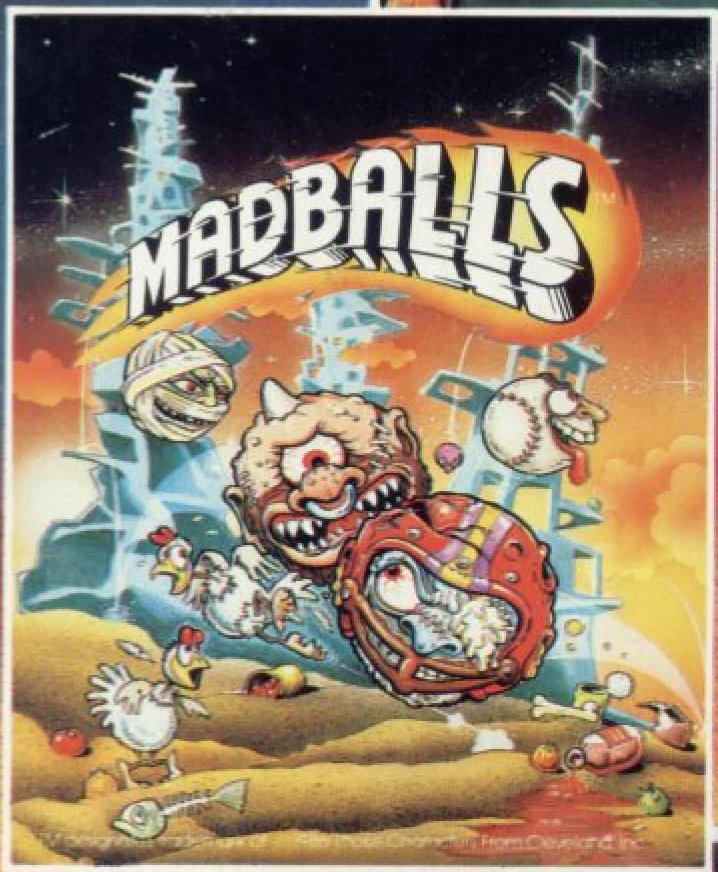
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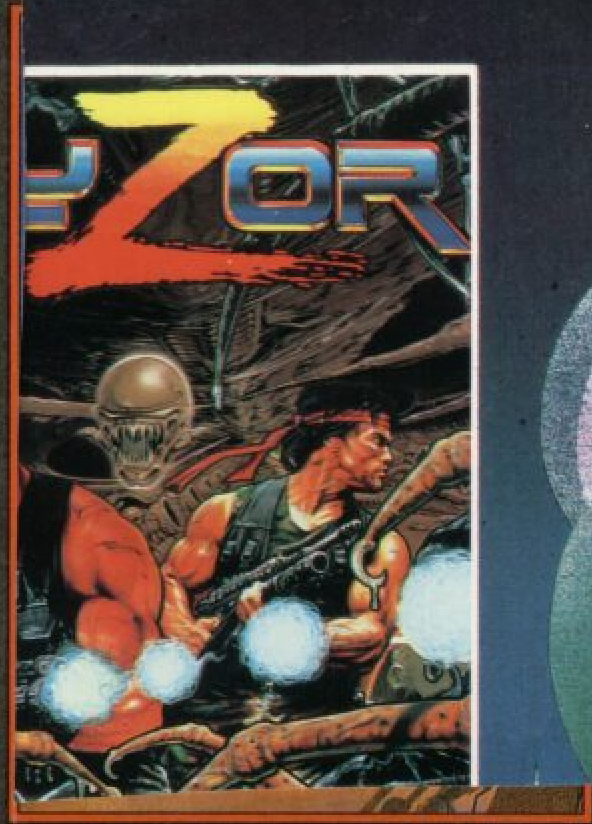


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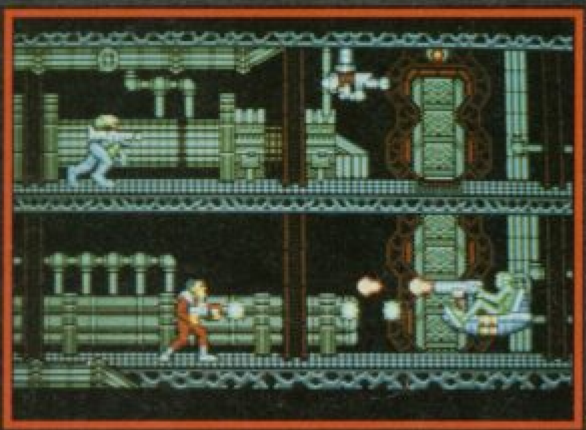
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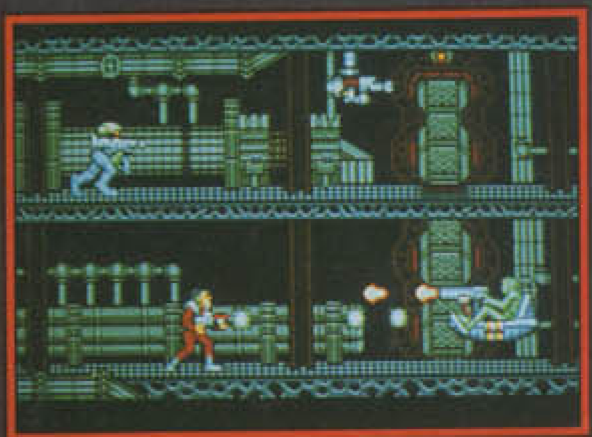
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Typeset by the **Tortoise Shell Press**, *Ludlow*. Colour origination by **Scan Studios**, *Wallace Road, London N1*. Printed in England by **Carlisle Web Offset**, *Newtown Trading Estate, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 7NR* – a member of the BPCC Group. Distribution by **COMAG**, *Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex*.

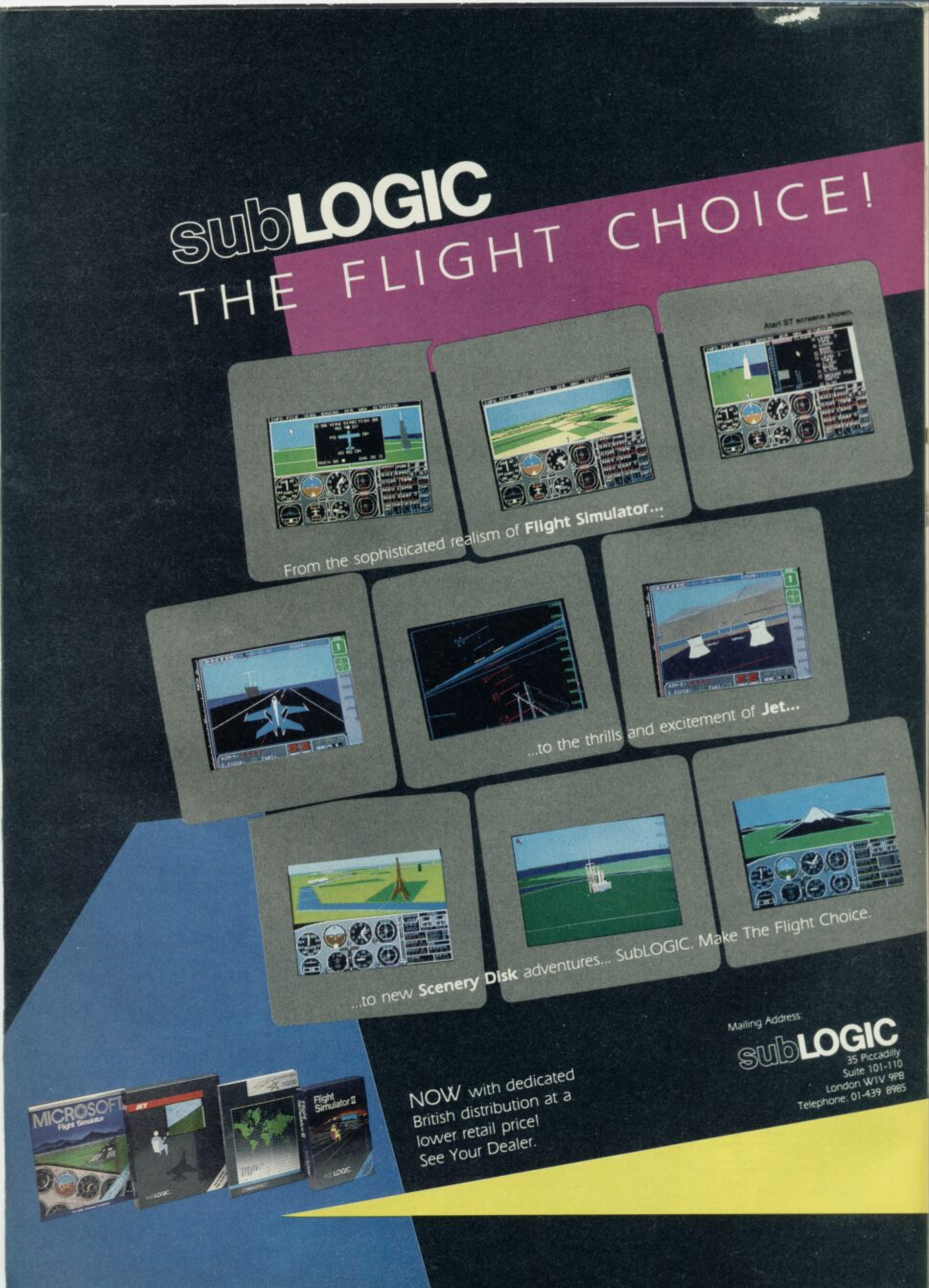
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The Editor's decision is final in all matters relating to adjudication and while we offer prizes in good faith, believing them to be available, if something untoward happens (like a game that has been offered as a prize being scrapped) we reserve the right to substitute prizes of comparable value. We'll do our very best to despatch prizes as soon as possible after the published closing date. Winners names will appear in a later issue of THE GAMES MACHINE. No correspondence can be entered into regarding the competitions (unless we've written to you stating that you have won a prize and it doesn't turn up, in which case drop Frances Mable a line at the PO Box 10 address). No person who has any relationship, no matter how remote, to anyone who works for either Newsfield or any of the companies offering prizes, may enter one of our competitions.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVER FREY

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Issue Four of THE GAMES MACHINE is on sale everywhere from February 18. Don't miss it! If you would like to subscribe, check out Page 110.



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READERPAGE

Thank you everyone who has written to READERPAGE with such a great variety of views. Of course, there's never enough space to fit them all in, but don't let that discourage you; we will expand the space in future issues. A common complaint has been the lack of a prize incentive for writing, but, unlike nearly every other magazine going, we decided not to offer one on the grounds that you really want to express your views and not just provide an excuse for a possible freebie! Are we wrong?

READERPAGE, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB*

SIMON GOODWIN WRITES

Dear Editor
Paul Hanson of Hampstead should check his own facts before rushing to criticise my carefully-researched article in THE GAMES MACHINE Issue One. His letter, published on page 13 of Issue Two, contained a number of 'corrections' to my article that were uniformly wrong, and defamatory in tone.

I admit to one error in the article; I got part of the title of Nolan Bushnell's first game wrong. *Computer Space* was the first ever arcade game – not *Pong*, the follow-up which Hanson remembered. 2,000 fibreglass *Computer Space* consoles were produced and sold in 1972.

As Martin Amis noted in his early history of the genre (*Invasion Of The Space Invaders*, Hutchinson, 1982), *Computer Space* was much more significant than *Pong*: 'The proto-game {*Computer Space*} wasn't ping-pong; it was a game which anticipated with astounding precision the more elaborate video consoles of the future.'

Nuff said?

Jack Tramiel resigned from Commodore, under protest, with his sons in tow, after a long and public row with other members of the board. I summarised this by saying, 'Jack Tramiel and his family were thrown out of their own firm', and so they were.

Uncle Jack tries to give the impression that the parting was amicable, but only Winston Smith (and, apparently, Paul Hanson, Atari ST owner) would believe that after studying quotes and reports of the row as it happened.

GEM was implemented on the IBM PC before it was converted for the ST, so I was quite right to say, 'a friendly front-end, GEM, was imported from IBM systems . . . '. In the very next sentence I made it clear that Digital Research wrote GEM!

And finally, IBM *is* the largest shareholder in Intel, and yes, Intel – among others – does make processors for clone manufacturers; isn't capitalism wonderful?

Hanson seems to be trying to defend the Atari ST, where no defence is necessary. If anything is bad about the ST, it's the fact that Atari's rather hysterical marketing policy seems to appeal to a minority of vociferous but ignorant people like Paul Hanson. Still, it takes all sorts to make a market.
Simon N Goodwin

AN OLDER VIEW

Dear Games Machine
Well done on your first two issues. It is a very interesting idea and is being executed well. As one of your older readers (I am 25), I would say it is more readable than a lot of the alternatives.

I have a suggestion. I have just upgraded from a Spectrum, which I bought four years ago, to an Atari ST. I am very pleased with it and I'm sure many others are in the same position.

The difference from the early days of Sir Clive's machine is that a software base gradually built for the Spectrum – and I kept up with the best of it – but with new computers such as Atari and Amiga, there is an existing software base from the United States coming in and conversions from other machines. It is therefore not only the new software that needs reviewing, but also the best of the older stuff.

Well I look forward to reading more and more outstanding Atari reviews in the coming months.

If you feel you need an older view on some of your software reviews I would be happy to help in that direction. I feel the type of software enjoyed by adults with less available time can vary a lot from even older teenagers.
John Vincent, Reading, Berks

This is of course the benefit for new Atari owners (and Amiga is catching up with its new found predominance in America), that there is a large ready-made American software base. However, it is only now beginning to arrive in the UK and still can't match that for the Spectrum or Commodore 64.

DISLLOYDAL

Dear Games Machine
What! I don't believe it! I must have missed a bit. No, it's true; Newsfield have actually produced a magazine without Lloyd Mangram's name appearing somewhere or other. Standards are slipping. Badly. It won't be long before we have Roger Kean doing the artwork or even, perish the thought, Oliver Frey as Editor.

And this Mel Croucher. He's fairly getting around. He'll soon be appearing as often as old Lloyd used to. Wait a minute, wait a minute. A thought is forming here. LM and Mel. Mmmm. Ask yourself this readers: are these two people in fact separate identities? – or is it a cunning ploy to cut down on staff costs on the part of Oli. Obviously there are some differences. Lloyd's dictionary has disappeared, (to be replaced by the Rev Mel's Bible), but I think there's something in this. Mel's story in CRASH vanished a bit suddenly, didn't it. Overwork, perhaps? Or underpay? The plot thickens.

I'm afraid I missed Issue One. Any chance of a back number?
John McKinlay, Fife

Lloyd says he can't work on THE GAMES MACHINE, because he finds it confusing that the disks go in on the side of an ST and the Amiga (disklexia?), whereas Mel has a voracious bank manager to support. Back Numbers are available, although we haven't put an advert in yet. Just write to: BACK NUMBERS, THE GAMES MACHINE,* PO Box 20, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB, *saying what you want and enclosing a payment of £1.45 (includes P+P).

GENERALLY PLEASED

Dear Games Machine
THE GAMES MACHINE has arrived at the right time for me, as I am beginning to use my Amstrad after a period of quiet. I used to get AMTIX!, until it folded. I already had a high opinion of Newsfield magazines, having read CRASH in the days when I had a Spectrum, as well.

THE GAMES MACHINE could prove to be the best yet. There are far more articles for one thing, and not page after page of reviews. You have managed to get the number and style of reviews just right. Congratulations. I am glad to see an Adventure Section in evidence, but may I request a regular Strategy column – you appear interested in Role-Playing – I think this would be good, besides I like strategies.

Speaking of Role-Playing games, I'm glad to see your writers are well-informed and obviously qualified to write on this topic. An awful lot of rubbish has been spouted about them.

I hope the letters page expands since one page is nowhere near enough for one of the best parts of the magazine.

Wouldn't it be a good idea if you colour coded the computer format section, in the reviews, thus making it easy for readers to find the relevant review at a glance? I suppose this might prove a bit garish, but worth a try?

I hope THE GAMES MACHINE proves successful, as it is the best magazine on the stands at the moment.

In the Shades competition is MUG a printing error? You mean MUD surely?
J Pengelly, Cardiff

Thank you for the kind comments! Actually there does seem to have been page after page of reviews, but that was more due to the bi-monthly status, and should ease off on a monthly basis. Colour-coding them might make it all look a bit military, and besides, the idea is that every review (as far as possible) is of interest to every reader because most games cross all formats, including coin-ops more and more. We didn't want to create any 'format ghettos'. Strategies will find their place – there are a couple in this issue – don't worry! And MUG was not a printing error, it stands for Multi User Game.

MSX USER GROUP

Dear Games Machine
First I would like to congratulate THE GAMES MACHINE on the emphasis given to MSX, and for once publishing a very enjoyable computer magazine. It seems that some magazines just don't want to offer anything to the 200,000 strong MSX users in the UK

I know your magazine can't provide MSX-ers with all the information that they require, so I would appreciate it if you would let them know of **MSX Link International**; we are currently the biggest MSX user group in the UK, and the Scottish office publishes a separate monthly magazine dedicated to the MSX user. It costs only £8 per year to join, this includes a monthly eight- to ten- page newsletter packed with useful information and advice. If anyone is interested and would like further information then please contact the address below, and please send a SAE.

MSX Link International, *North Lodge, Cairnhill Road, Airdrie, Lanarkshire ML6 9RJ.*
Craig Bell, Lanarkshire

To be honest with you, we suffered a setback this issue, when our MSX machine was taken! But that will be put right soon.

WHERE ARE THE MUG GRAPHICS?

Dear Games Machine
I have just recovered enough to write this letter having visited the Adventure Players Convention that was held in the Europa Gallery at the Civic Centre, Sutton, November 28.

Just what this convention was supposed to achieve baffles me. What a badly organised affair it was. Yet another example of a brilliant idea gone wrong for lack of understanding on how to implement it. From the almost total lack of signs pointing out how to reach and enter the Civic Centre to the equally missing demonstrators on most of the displays, the whole thing was a mish-mash of incoherence.

Where were the champions of the MUGs? The MUDs? Who wanted to enroll

PRESS ANY KEY

me into the *Shades* dominion? The stupid kids who were sending swear words to each other by modem? The stand owners who all seemed to have found another location with the words 'Youngs Breweries' written over the entrance portal? I was not impressed!

I was also somewhat disenchanted by the rather misleading and spurious words put across as a serious lecture by one Peter Killworth! Before commenting on other people's parsers, this man should get the Topologica parser to understand just a couple more words than it does. His attempts at the destruction of other companies does *not* make his contribution better. And what does he *really* know of market forces and their requirements?

I have read interminable letters as to the need or otherwise of graphics in adventure games. Some want them, others do not. One argument that is put over repeatedly is that graphics are memory-hungry in the extreme. They take vast amounts of RAM from our home micros that is more usefully used in the plot or story-line. Okay! Point taken! I agree. But I like graphics. If they can be switched on and off as in Level 9 and Magnetic Scrolls even better, but I WANT THEM. For me they add to the game. Memory-hungry? SO WHAT? I am not talking about home micros!

This was the convention for the Multi-User Game. The mainframe-driven mega-adventure that can cope with the demands of dozens of players simultaneously! More RAM than you can shake a Wand of Annihilation at. (Acknowledgements to Infocom Inc for use of the Wand). RAM and RAM to spare. Where are the graphics? When I am told in a MUG that I can see a Huge Green Balrog with slavering jowls and putrescent ichor emanating from his foul and putrid body, I WANT TO SEE IT! At this convention I felt sure that I was going to be shown such things. Did anyone else see the graphics on the Ataris running *Defender Of The Crown*? If a relatively limited home micro can produce that, why not a DEC 10 or Dec 20? Am I to believe that soon the Multi-User Games will be run on text-only Cray supercomputers?

We DO want graphics despite what a lot of text-only writers would have us believe. I know all about the 'I buy a book without pictures because I would rather use my imagination' school of thought. But would you *really* have gone to the cinema to hear someone READ *Battlestar Galactica*, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Close Encounters*, or would you have rather seen the special effects and stunning graphics?

So come on you MUG controllers, get with it! Move with the times and lets get some pictures in there.

Yours very sincerely

Ron J Handy, London SW6

There must be a lot of readers with similar, or very opposed, views. So let's hear from you!

CROUCHER ANTI-VIOLENCE

Dear Games Machine

Having just read Mel croucher's admittedly funny feature entitled Where There's Yuk There's Brass in your Dec/Jan issue, I feel I must write in to winge, gripe moan and generally complain.

Now obviously I realise that Mr Croucher adopts a light-hearted, flippant approach when wielding his pen for entertainment-based organs such as yours and I wholeheartedly confess that I enjoy his various ramblings very much. But I can't help feeling that the issue dealt with in the aforementioned piece demands a lot more thought and depth of investigation. For instance, Mr C reiterates in his article that he does not wish to stand on any personal soap-box, but intends to convey the attitudes of others. How journalistically noble. However, I hardly think that anyone who read the piece – and since you're going monthly then there must be quite a few of them, congratulations – could disagree that the notion that Mr Croucher is dead-set against violent computer games really came across in the piece. A seemingly small gripe this, but because of it, the reader's attention is gradually drawn to the fact that he obviously had no intention of presenting us with a balanced argument and has instead opted for a biased, pro-censorship stance when confronted with the issue.

Nowhere, for example, does he mention the fact that there is absolutely *no* evidence to suggest that there is any link whatsoever between that anti-social actions certain sick members of our society perform, and the images people see on screens (of any kind); which is especially surprising when you consider exactly how much time, effort and money 'concerned' parties have spent attempting to forge links between the two. In fact, the two biggest studies into this would-be phenomenon have reached the verdict that there is no connection!

Sorry to bring up this again, but what happened in Hungerford was indeed a tragedy. And it's undoubted that particular elements of the Eighties society are to blame. But to see people so obviously out of touch with the world that I – and practically everyone I know – live in, looking around for a scapegoat, I can hardly be surprised to see them singling out manufactured images, designed to entertain, as the cause. Can you see Mary Whitehouse renting out *A Nightmare On Elm Street* for her Sunday afternoon's video entertainment? Or plugging into port two for a few missions of *Airborne Ranger* after the pub? Millions of people do, and enjoy the experience. But people have always been afraid of what they don't understand . . .

I could, but won't go on for ever. But one last point I'd like to bring up is this: why, in the whole four pages, does Mr C not even mention the fact that inside everybody there's a certain amount of aggression (and yes, that does include Mrs Whitehouse). Human beings the globe over experience the same basic drives and emotions in greater or lesser degrees. Aggression is perhaps one of the most problematic ones and if an individual has too much, or can't control the amount they have, the results are often disastrous. My point is that playing violent games, and watching violent films, can help to satiate these devils within us all. The fact is, that provided no persons or animals are in any way exploited in the manufacturing of these images, they could actually help to *prevent* anti-social behaviour. (This may seem a little too extreme to grasp right now, why not go away and check up on the sex-crime figures pertaining to countries where hard-core pornography is – and isn't – freely available).

Personally, I'd like to see more energy expended in investigating the issue looking from this angle. Censorship is negative. Crack down on the snuff-movie makers and throw the book at 'em! But let the equally concerned film-makers and games programmers continue to work their magic.

Besides all that, great mag, rad reviews, neat attitude and all in all the Phoenix from LM's ashes.

Steve Shields, London N15

Having been told about your letter, Steve, Mel expressed a serious interest is seeing, and probably replying, to it personally. But because the Christmas break intervened, it was not possible for him to do so in time for this issue – so watch out!

IS IT EUREKA?

Dear Games Machine

It's nice to see a change to computer mags and THE GAMES MACHINE shows all that is happening. Your reviews are good as well, showing other mags how to rate games.

Now this is what I want to know. Is the Archimedes computer any good, and how much memory has it got and has it got good sound? What is the price, is it better than the ST or Amiga?

One more question, why isn't there an arcade section in THE GAMES MACHINE?

I hope you keep up your high standard, which no one can beat.

Ian Robinson, London N17

The Archimedes is still a bit of a dark horse if you are considering an upgrade. Sales are reported to be still in – only four figures (less than 10,000 units in other words) which means that the software base is small – Zarch is the only game. The 300 Series has 0.5 Mbyte and 1 Mbyte RAM machines with 512 Kbyte ROM and 1Mbyte 3½" disk drive. Top of the 400 series, the Archimedes 440, has 4 Mbyte of RAM, 512 ROM and a 20 Mbyte hard disk drive. But the computer's power lies in its new RISC processor – reputedly making it the fastest home computer available, capable of executing 4 million instructions per second. The sound capacity is huge: two-channel with eight-voice digital stereo through the internal loudspeaker, or to an amplifier or headphones sources through a jack socket. It isn't cheap though, the most basic monochrome package will set you back £700, and you can easily spend over £2,000.



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PCW SHOW TO MOVE

AFTER four years at its Olympia venue, Britain's computer leisure showcase is changing exhibition halls. The Personal Computer World Show moved to Olympia in search of more space for its growing list of exhibitors and visitors, but the halls there have now become too cramped for comfort. The 1988 show – to be held from September 14 to 18 – will be in the main hall at Earls Court, London.

This move has been predicted for some time, but still came a year earlier than expected. With space bookings already running at a new high, and an expected upsurge in the number of visitors over the next few years, it is likely that the show will have to move again before long, although only next door to the new Earls Court II, which opens this year.

After last year's abortive attempt by EMAP, publishers of *C&VG*, *Sinclair User* and *Commodore User* to create a games only show in direct competition with PCW for 1988, PCW has responded by re-examining their basic philosophy of a leisure hall and a closed business section. The 1988 show will be clearly divided into three distinct sections covering business, general computing (serious but not business) and leisure. The change is aimed to meet the needs of both visitors and exhibitors.

For computer leisure seekers, more events than ever before are in the early planning stages, and the 1988 PCW Show should be the best ever held. During forthcoming months THE GAMES MACHINE will be bringing you details and items of interest about the show as we hear them. Stay tuned.

After the 10th PCW Show, Olympia became too small



A YEN TO MAKE PROFIT

NINTENDO, the giant Japanese computer and game console company, saw its profits for the year to August 31 1987 rise by a massive 26%. They forecast that shipments to the US of their family consoles will reach 4.6 million units for the next year. Already there are reported to be 15 million machines worldwide, and we now await, with baited breath, the arrival of the latest in the line, the PC Engine.

THE ALTERNATIVE REALITY

ALTERNATIVE SOFTWARE has obtained the rights to games titles from Piranha, Audiogenic, Incentive and Bubble Bus to rerelease them at the budget price of £1.99. Piranha's contribution amid the plethora of titles will include *Trap Door*, *Popeye*, *Rogue Trooper*, *Strike Force Cobra* and *Nosferatu*. Alternative's future budget rereleases are to include *Mooncresta* (Incentive) and *Psycastria* (Audiogenic).



Getting the taste for software, Alternative's managing director, Roger Hulley

THE 9th AMSTRAD COMPUTER SHOW

DOORS OPEN on February 19 for the ninth Amstrad Computer Show organised by Database Exhibitions. The venue has been changed from Alexandra Pavilion to the much larger larger Great Hall at Alexandra Palace, due, Database claim, to the demand from both the public and exhibitors. The show will run from Thursday to Saturday as opposed to the previous Friday to Sunday period to cater for a growing business interest in the Amstrad market.

HEAVY MATTEL

SOON to hit our TV screens is a new cartoon series called *Captain Power And The Soldiers Of The Future* from the **Landmark Entertainment Group**, an American company. **Mattel** has gained the licence to produce the subject related toys. However, these promise to be somewhat more interactive than many that have gone before.

The purchaser will be supplied with a hand-held Future Phantom Striker jet which interacts with the broadcast programme. For between three to five minutes each episode, owners of the toys may participate by blasting the deadly Bio-Dread robots which appear on the screen. The jets shoot invisible infra-red rays at the robotic enemies of Captain Power and when they hit a target, signals given out from the screen score points for the jet.

If the targets are missed points are deducted, and when the points reach zero the jet's pilot is ejected onto the carpet. The jets – which may be used to fight each other – can also be utilised with Captain Power videotapes, allowing up to 15 minutes of interactive play.

Only available in the States at the moment Captain Power (the cartoon, the videos and the jets fighters) will be released worldwide within the next few weeks.

BOARD WITH TANKS

TANKATTACK is a new board/computer game to arrive on our shores from Irish-based **Anderson Electronic Ltd.** It can be played by two to four players and the general aim is to capture the enemy HQ or destroy all enemy forces using plastic moulded tanks, a game board and a computer program.

Computers have had an unhappy association to date with board games, usually relegated to acting as nothing more than a pair of dice. In *Tankattack* the software, although it does perform the same function as dice, also has more to do; the players input moves, select their targets and the computer informs them of the results of their actions. It is a game of strategy where good judgement and planning is rewarded and bad judgement is punished. Presently available only for the Commodore 64, it is soon to be released on Spectrum and Amstrad formats. Look out for a full review of Tank Attack in Issue Four of THE GAMES MACHINE.



Able to afford a shirt again, Paul Cooper of Thalamus

OOPS!

IN THE review of *Quedex* last issue it was stated that Hagar the Horrible composed the game's music. This was an out-and-out lie. It was of course Maestro **Matt Gray**. Obviously we included this error on purpose and were secretly willing to give a copy of the game to the first lucky reader who spotted the mistake. We only had one entry (you unobservant lot!) and a cassette version of *Quedex* is now winging its way to Paul Cooper of Thalamus Ltd. Well done Paul.

TREASURE HUNT WINNERS

AT LAST year's PCW Show, visitors were invited to take part in a treasure hunt, searching for cryptic clues among the stands, which could help them win a first prize of £1000. There were four joint sponsors, each of which had a clue posted somewhere on their stand, and they were **Mastertronic**, ("Arcadia"), **Newsfield ("Games"), Euromax** ("Professional") and **Domark** ("Archer"). All entries were posted on the Domark stand, and after judging Commercial Artist **John Jarratt** was declared the winner. He visited the home of Domark in wildest Wimbledon to collect his prize. There were also 44 runners up who have already receives either a Euromax Joystick, a copy of the Domark game *Star Wars* or (worth much more than the measly thousand pounds) a year's subscription to THE GAMES MACHINE. Here are the lucky winners

A Fairhurst, Wigan WN2 1UT
Martin Ellis, Warrington
B Taylor, London E9 6PP
J K Martin, London E8 3HB
John Swanson, Slough SL1 0LU
Graeme Taylor, Brigg DN20 8AG
C Whiley, Leigh On Sea SS9 1ER
Robert Sausman, London SE9 4TG
Lesley Grimoldby, Folkestone CT19 4AY
DK Hamm, Reading RG3 7BQ
Stephen Knight, Clifton SG17 5EJ
Nicholas Reckitt, Grt Shelford CB2 4AY
David Brown, Reading RG4 8UG
M Manley, Chesterfield S42 6UU
Mark Richardson, Maidenhead SL6 3RQ
D Maxwell, Hampstead NW3 6SX
JV Rymer, Brighton SX
J Counsell, Crowborough TN6 2UR
DE Done, Marlow SL7 2AR
G Hamlett, London SW2
Ken Jones, Aylesbury HP21 7JX
Richard Mann, Ilford IG1 4AL
P Belben, Wells BA5 1JX
Martin Robinson, Bicester OX6 8BL
Karen Hansen, Swansea SA1 5ED
Ian Thompson, New Barnet EN5 5AP
Sandra James, Bridgend CF35 6BG
Terry Larkin, Walton On Thames KT12 3HB
A Larkin, Chelmsford CM3 5JN
Ian Airlie, Kingston KT1 2HP
JO Carlton, Totley S17 4FD
DJ Mitchell, Bletchley MK3 6DE
Owen Thomas, West Ealing W13 9EF
AR Dicey, Bredgar ME9 8EB
S Roberts, London SW7 2DD
RA Hunwicks, Canvey Is
DM Jones, Colchester CO3 3NS
RN Arrowsmith, Rochdale OL12 7JG
M Gale, Guildford GU2 5LJ
GDW Lewis, Croydon CR0 2AJ
PJ Carter, Benfleet SS7 1NH
D Scobie, London SE27 0RS
Jeremy Brown, London SW19 3EN
James Byrne, Peterborough PE1 2QW

Seated between Domark's Mark Strachan (left) and Dominic Wheatley, John Jarratt collects his £1000 in the form of a giant cheque (probably written on a tablecloth from the InDin – the software industry's Christmas dinner). The prize was jointly sponsored by Domark, Euromax, Newsfield and Mastertronic



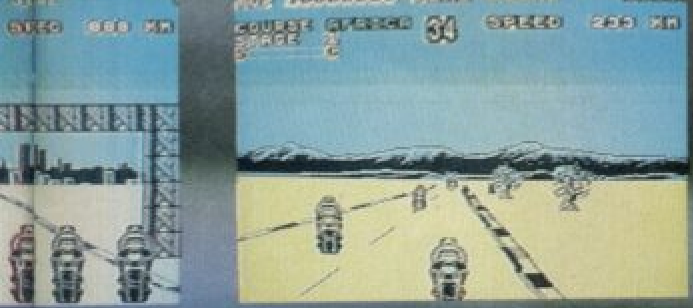
ELITE WITH A FRENCH CONNECTION

DURING the 1987 PCW Show, Paris-based **Loriciels** signed a long-term agreement giving **Elite Systems Ltd** the rights to market the French company's games in the UK. Although not all Loriciels products will be seen over here (some of them have a content that is too French for the British taste) they expect to release at least 14 game titles during 1988; these will include *500cc Grand Prix*, *Sapiens*, a compilation entitled *Straight Six* and an arcade adventure *Bob Winner*. Most of the games will cover the 8-bit formats as well as the Atari ST and IBM-PC Compatibles. Elite foreseee the agreement lasting at least two years.

KONIX MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

FOLLOWING a very successful twelve-month period in which **Konix** has more than doubled its turnover, the company has moved from their factory at Tredegar in Wales to a new site in Ebbw Vale (pronounced Ebbw Vale). It would appear that the Konix joystick has proved so successful that demand eventually outgrew the old factory's production capacity. The new, larger site will allow Konix to recruit more staff and consequently produce more joysticks. An opening ceremony, performed by the Rt Hon Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Wales, was held on January 15.

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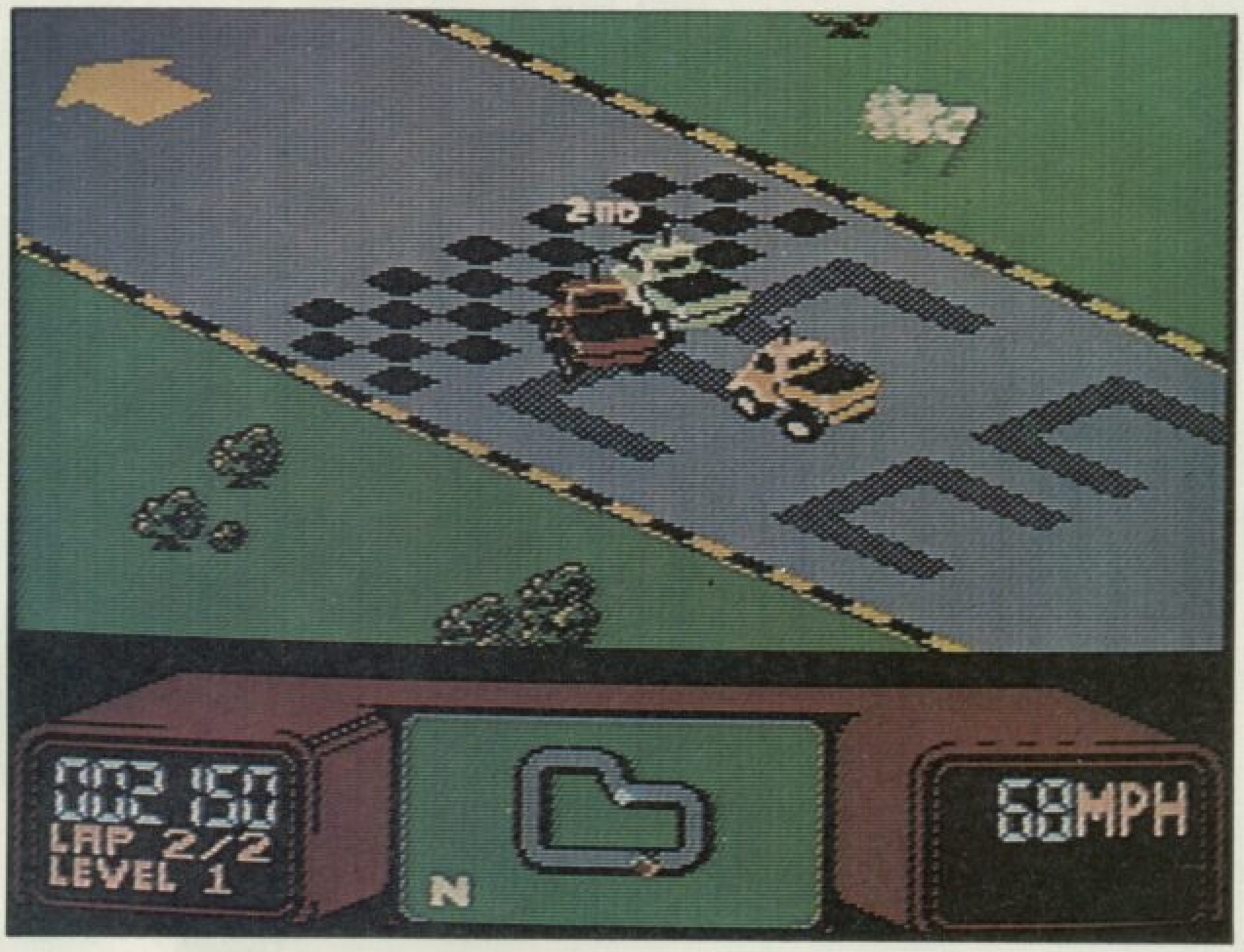
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ELECTRIC DREAMS
SOFTWARE

A RARE TREAT

The Nintendo lives! With 15 million worldwide sales of Nintendo machines, the Japanese games giant could well revolutionise the European games scene soon . . .

MASTERTRONIC with its Arcadia label is not the only British company with its eyes on the coin-op market. Spectrum-owning **Ultimate (Play The Game)** watchers will have noticed in the past that some Ultimate games carried the enigmatic sub-credit **Rare Ltd**, and may have wondered who *they* were exactly. Next month THE GAMES MACHINE reveals the secret for the first time. But the name Rare is about to emerge from obscurity in a rather spectacular way, and one of the products likely to pop your eyes is a new coin-op arcade board based around the Z80 processor. But Rare also designs Nintendo machine games of a quality that has made the company's name something to reckoned with in Japan and America (whereas they are almost unknown in the UK). More details in next month's issue, for the meantime we'll just tantalise you with a screen shot . . .



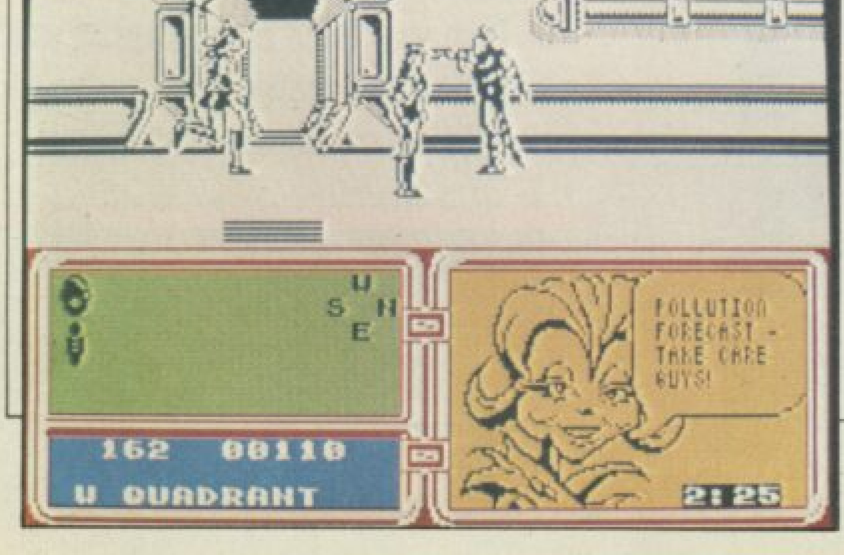
A collision at 68mph can rattle your gums – a common occurrence in Pro-Am Race, one of the fastest and funniest road games you're ever likely to see on the Nintendo – and it's a British product

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

THOUGH PIRANHA's *Judge Death* game is slightly delayed through being rewritten, their other *2000 AD* licensed character, Alan Moore's inimitable future-girl-next-door, *Halo Jones* is well on the way. A young woman born in the 50th Century on The Hoop – a special section of the city for the unemployed – Halo, the poor girl, just wants to do some shopping for her monthly supplies, but it isn't as easy as that. The Hoop is littered with villainous gangs like the Dangerous Drummers, Proximen and the Punks. The shopping centre is at The Hoop's other side from Halo's quarters, but armed with her trusty Sputsticks and continual messages from Swifty Frisco her job shouldn't prove to difficult.

Well, certainly not as difficult as the job Piranha has lined up for you in *Coven*, a game devised by THE GAMES MACHINE's **John Gilbert**. Playing a witch – in a sect of 13 who serve Lucifer – you alone have broken the faith and begin a quest which will destroy several covens before the Forces Of Evil take over the world. We should have some more details on that in the next issue.

The polution forecast isn't looking too good – shopping could be a dirty business – Spectrum screen



ALL MUSCLES AND . . .

. . . **MORE** muscles really. But isn't that Schwarzenegger all over? Arnie's just about to be dropped into the jungle after some unexplained things happened, but his helicopter lets him down with a bang, and there he is slap-bang, so to speak, right in the middle of **Activision**'s latest film licence, *Predator*. The unexplained soon becomes commonplace, as Arnie and his fellow military hunters discover their adversary is a hairy alien hooray Harry who's dropped in on Earth for a spot of big-game hunting, and having filleted and eaten the easy locals, Arnie's the biggest game around.

Graphically, *Predator* looks fine, so all that is needed now is some adrenalin-filled action to top it off. We should be seeing *Predator* soon on the Spectrum, Commodore, Amstrad and ST.



The Amstrad Predator and his chopper

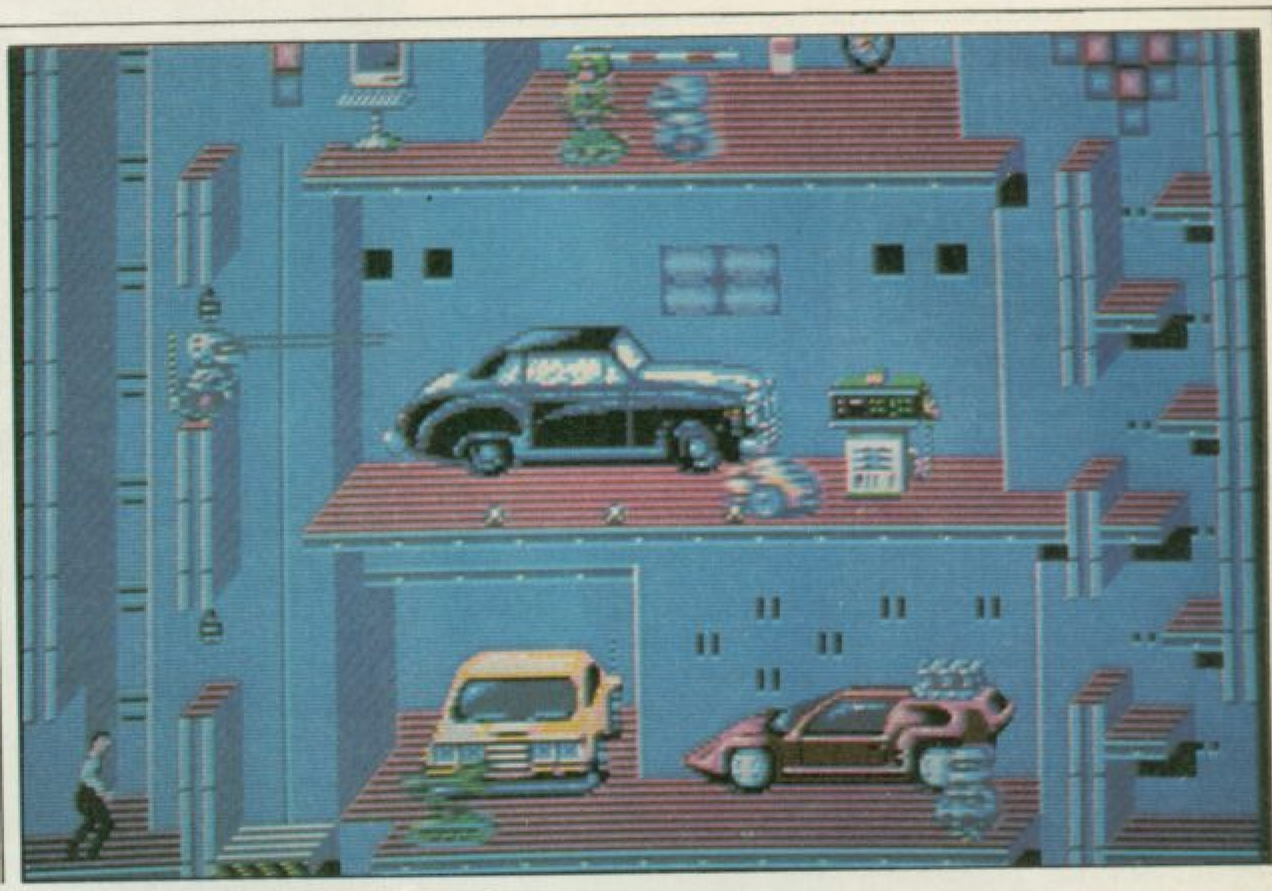
It's that nice Mr Schwarzenegger starring as a pixel in Activision's Predator – Atari ST screen



ANOTHER DEADLY MISSION

AFTER what seems an eon since **Epyx** enjoyed a cult success with *Impossible Mission* on the Commodore 64 (remember the speech?), the American software giant is set to repeat the exercise with *Impossible Mission II*. Very much like the original, it is set over a series of five towers, which act as difficulty levels – the gym, the garage, canteen, warehouse and finally a large high–tech office block. Planned for the sequel are loads of different robots, each with individual characteristics. *Mission* the first was marketed in the UK by US Gold, but the sequel goes out under Epyx's own name, and is to be released soon for the Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, Amstrad and ST.

Long-awaited sequel to the Epyx blockbuster, **Impossible Mission** *on the ST*



ARCADIA ARCADE

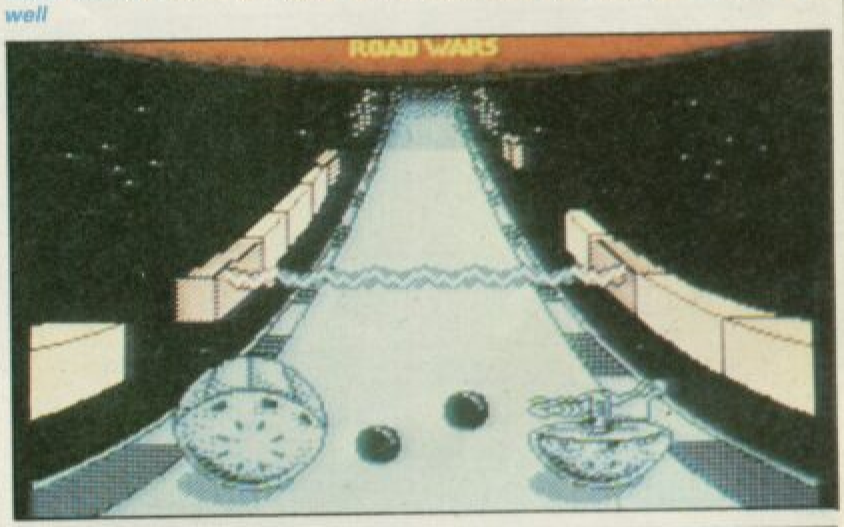
WE'RE BEGINNING to see the benefits of **Mastertronic**'s offshoot **Arcadia**, a new branch of the coin-op industry. Based around the Commodore Amiga board with an upgrade in memory of 1.5 megabytes, the new arcade games simply slot into existing cabinets. For the arcade operator it means fast, cheap changes, and for the Amiga owner it means real arcade conversions in the home at the flick of an eye. The first Arcadia coin-op release last year was *Road Wars*, and Mastertronic have it ready now for release under their **Melbourne House** label on Amiga and ST, closely followed by Spectrum, Commodore 64/128 and Amstrad versions.

The action takes place on a never-ending 3-D future highway and is a forced two-player game. Each player controls a ball-shaped vehicle equipped with lasers, and the idea is to blast everything that comes your way. In gun-mode, the vehicle opens up to reveal the laser to blast oncoming hazards and roadside generators which hurl lightning at you. In shield-mode, the craft returns to a sphere so it can resist impacts as you bash others off the road. With both players side by side, the game can get very rough, especially when, on later levels, instead of two exits to the next level, there is only one – After you . . . No, after you please . . .

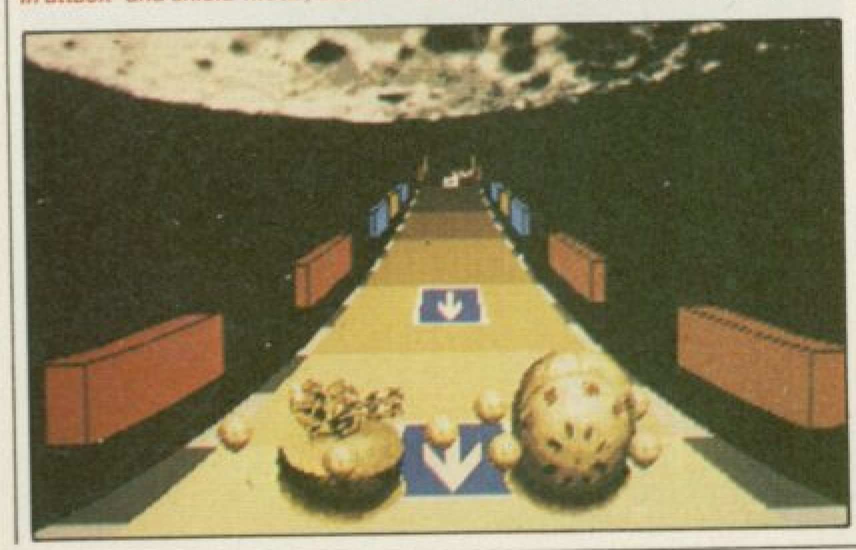
Road Wars conversions are in the capable hands of **Binary Design**, and if you attended last year's PCW Show, you may have noticed Mastertronic's big gamble, displaying the Amiga and Spectrum demo versions one above the other on their stand – incredibly, the Spectrum compared extremely well because, forgetting the lack of colour of course, *Road Wars* is exactly the Spectrum's type of game!

Also set for an early Melbourne House release is *Xenon*, another game from Arcadia and basically a challenging and very attractive vertical scroll shoot-'em-up using a double-mode craft. This one's for the Amiga and ST only – at the moment.

Not of course as colourful, but the Spectrum Road Wars *plays pretty much as well*



In attack- and shield-mode; blaze that trail in the ST version of Road Wars



ALIEN SYNDROME

ALIEN SYNDROME is a Sega arcade conversion from **The Edge**, which attempts to incorporate all the original's features for the home computer.

Played by one or two participants (one male, one female), the aim is for the hero(es) to enter one of five progressively dangerous alien spacecraft, blasting their way through the corridors to find and rescue their incarcerated crew. Once all the humans have been rescued it's time to blast a way out again before the inevitable meeting with the ultimate, all-powerful alien indigenous to each level. On level one, for example, this rather nasty piece of work is apparently similar to a semi-deflated hot-air balloon, complete with two heads which spit poisonous venom at our heroes. It takes a lot to kill, but when it goes it explodes into a mass of venom and fire . . . very tasteful.

The corridors of the various spacecraft are depicted in a similar way to the mazes in *Gauntlet* and are viewed from the same overhead point. Maps are dotted around the screens to help the player(s) find their way about and weapons may be picked up to enhance their arsenal. Rescued team members may be utilised to help with the rescue mission.

Alien Syndrome is out for the Commodore 64 in January, closely followed by the Spectrum, ST and Amiga versions.

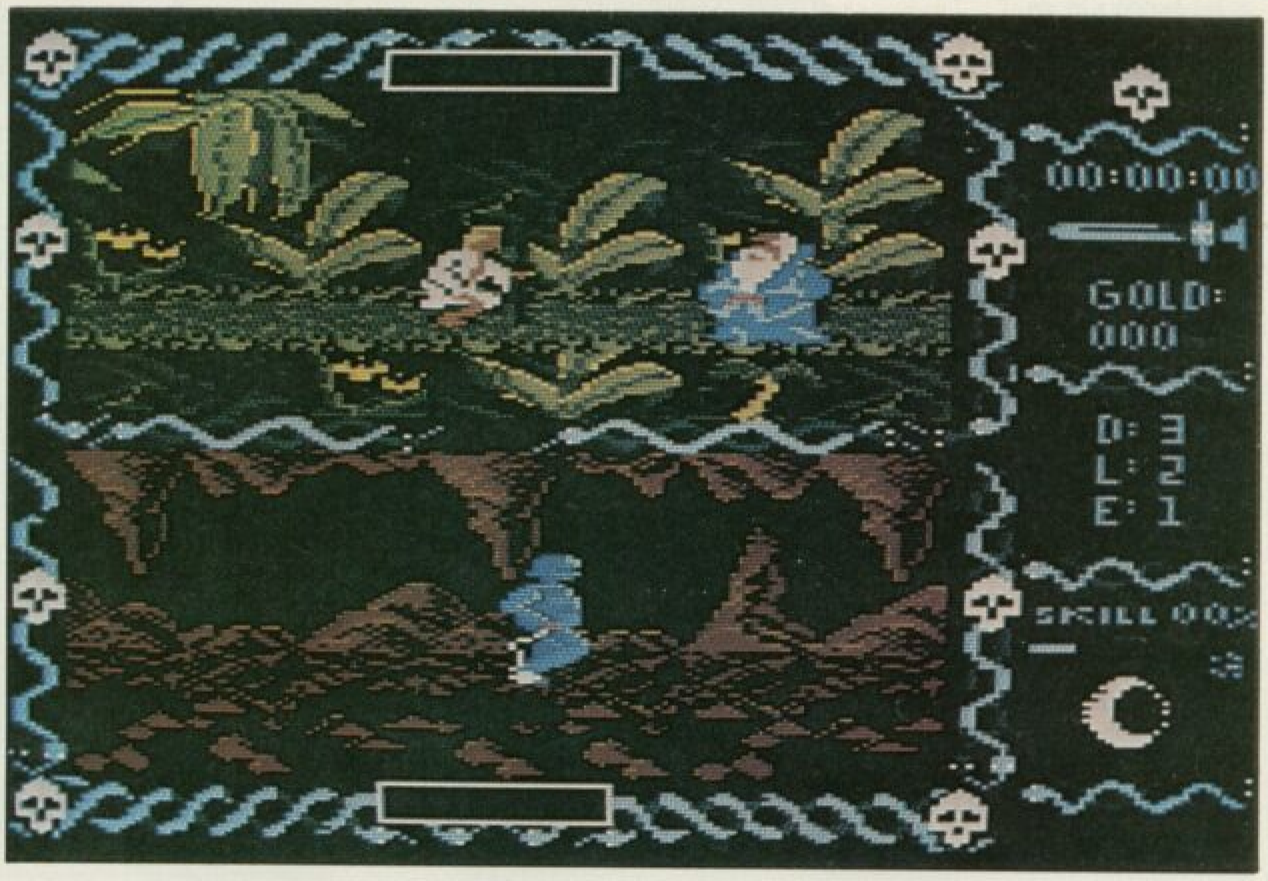
Another dashing rescue attempt awaits you in Alien Syndrome – Commodore 64 screen



WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR . . .

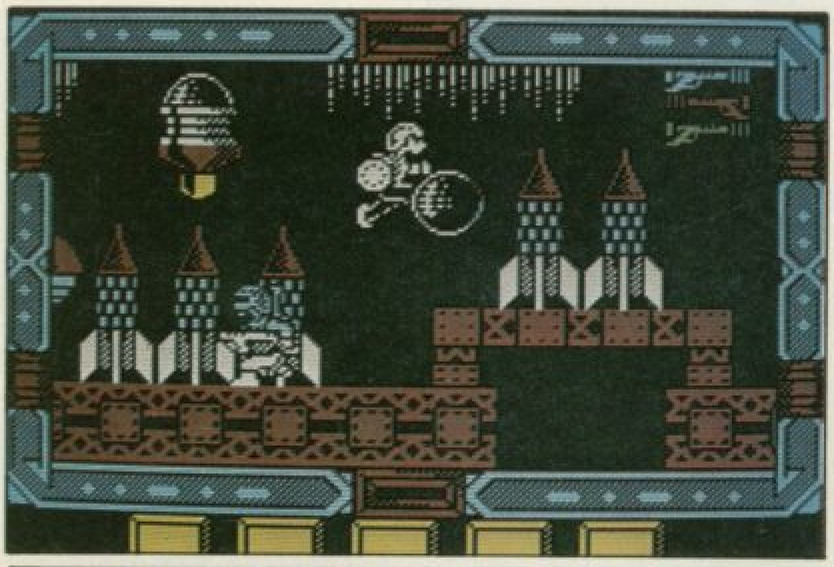
WE'RE NOT supposed to say this yet, but as we go to press **Gremlin Graphics** are trying to obtain the rights to market *Mickey Mouse* – the computer game. All we've seen so far are some blurred screen shots (try and hold the camera steady next time, Richard), but Mickey looks like a very good blur. More news on that soon. Meantime get ready for *Northstar* a fly-around/platform/shoot-the-aliens game set aboard an orbiting space station which is under attack. That's for the Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad and ST soonish.

By the time you read this column, *Blood Valley*, after a delayed release, should be on the shelves. From what we saw of the preview version it did not look to be up to Gremlin's normal standards but hopefully they should have sorted it out by now.



Not so hot when we saw a demo, by the time it's finished Blood Valley *should provide fun in combat*

Big graphics on the Spectrum look promising in Gremlin's Northstar

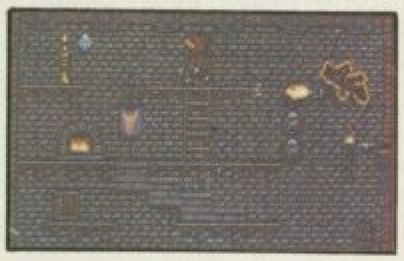


ALL BLACK

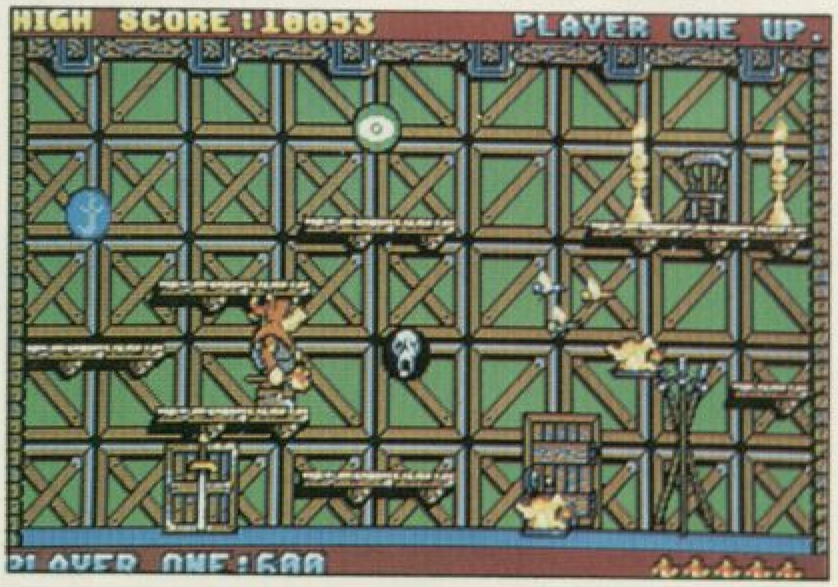


ONE from **Firebird** and the other from **CRL**, and at first both 16-bit products.

Black Lamp on the Firebird label takes the form of a cutesy platforms-and-ladders game set in the Dark Ages, so called because King Maxim had all his enchanted lanterns stolen. Playing Jovial Jack the jolly jester, you ragingly romp round screen upon screen of glorious graphics, amazing animation and annoying alliteration. *Black Lamp*, set for release on the ST in the early Spring, is currently being written by **Steve Cain** and **Graham Everett** (part of the team behind *Star Trek*).



Black Shadow from CRL on the Amiga is another arcade-quality shoot-'em-up. To be honest we have seen little of it so far, apart from an early running demo. It had little gameplay in, but the graphics are most impressive – as is the (in all affection) gloriously corny film studio style 'Welcome to the World of CRL' credit card.



CHAMPIONSHIP GRAND PRIX FORMULA ONE SUPER SIMULATOR SPRINT PLUS . . .

. . . THE SEQUEL. It's really just *Championship Sprint* – the sequel to **Electric Dreams**'s *Super Sprint* of last September. What's new then?

Well, you can design your own courses, race new cars, design more courses, set new records, design even more courses and so on. It's bigger and better, they say, that's what. Exciting news just coming in though, is that **Activision** have licensed the very big coin-ops *Afterburner* and *Lock On* from Sega. Check out page 69 where THE GAMES MACHINE reviews *Afterburner* and get an eyeful of the graphics (if you haven't done so in an arcade already). They'll have to work hard to capture the effects on the 8-bits and it won't be too easy on the 16-bits either.

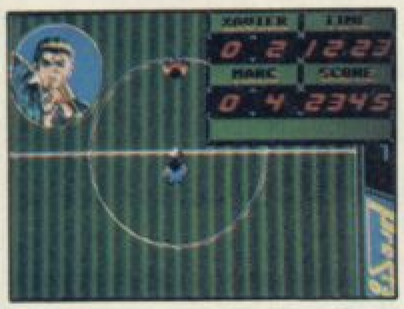




CHUNNEL IMPORTS

DON'T take a wager on your Gary Lineker T–shirt that 16-bit owners are not jealous of *Match Day II* at the moment. But if you hop over the Channel to France you may just bump into someone from new software house **Satory**; they are releasing *Hotball*, a great-looking football game for both the ST and Amiga. However, if you can't wait for the Channel Tunnel to open, you should shortly be able to pop down the high street and pick up a copy thanks to **Active Sales And Marketing** who are releasing it over here.

Have you ever seen such a perfect pitch? ST Hotball *– due through the Chunnel soon*

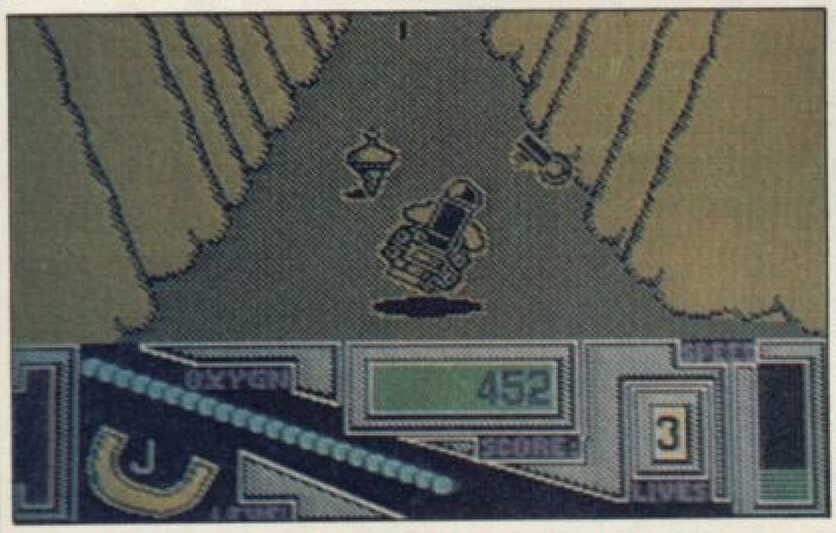




DESTINY

FRANCIS LEE, ex-Beyond/ex-Starlight person now running new software house **Destiny**, has a mountain of interesting games lined up for 1988.

He kicks off with two original Spectrum games; the first, written and created by **Nick Eatock**, whose previous titles include *Greyfell* and *Sorderon's Shadow*, is called *Teladon*. It combines two separate parts – beginning with a horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up as you guide a hoverbike down a valley with enemy weaponry blazing at you. Get though that and you are plumped right into the middle of an isometric world for a separate adventure.



Scrolling towards Nick Eatock's Teladon *in the first part of the game*



It is your Destiny *on the Spectrum*

The second, *Yeti*, written by Spectrum veterans **Christian Urquhart** and **Mike Smith**, who together form the **Cybadyne** team, is set in the snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas in search of the fabled Big Foot. Fearing for the creature's safety the locals are hot on your trail, eager to prevent you from succeeding in your quest by using both material and arcane means. Graphically it looks pretty spectacular – what the gameplay is like, we will find out sometime in the Spring.

POWERING UP (AGAIN)

BUDGET software company **Power House** has a semi-relaunch this year with a new look and a host of new product as well as some old American favourites whose titles you will undoubtedly recognise.

The line up includes *Dambusters, Fight Night, BC's Quest For Tires, Grog's Revenge, Desert Fox* and many more. On the value front Power House have released eight Commodore 64/128 double-disks each disk consisting of two games. Probably best of the bunch is the *Hercules* and *Gods And Heroes* disk. Both games are really simple, but amazing fun to play.

And Power House is also launching its own record label starting with American rock band The Coathangers. The discs (spelt with a 'c' and not a 'k') are pressed in dynamic red vinyl for that added j'ne sais quoi. They probably won't get reviewed in THE GAMES MACHINE, we'll leave that to *NME* and *MM*.

However, If you fancy winning a copy of the record and your choice of three Power House games here's your chance in this bijou Comp. Simply tell us the title of the recently released 'Computer Nasty' that caused such a stir. Pop the answer on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope along with your name, address, which computer you own and your choice of three games and send it to **I HAVE THE POWER COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than February 25, or we'll crush your cuddlies! First out of the bag wins.

And finally THE GAMES MACHINE would like to take this opportunity to say *bon voyage* to Power House person **Jo Meads**, who flies off soon to Austraila for a few months. Don't stay away too long, Jo, we'll miss you.

IT'S GONNA BE ALL WHITE ON THE NIGHT!

Having steeped himself in steaming sexism and ripped the guts out of gory violence, the third of Mel Croucher's industry analyses shines the spotlight on racism in software.

Jack the Nipper picked his nose: Gremlin Graphics's Ian Stewart



Did you hear the one about the South African piano? Nobody could play it because all the black keys were kept under the white ones. Earlier this year, there was a call from within our computer industry to boycott trade with South Africa as a protest against apartheid, the system of treating people differently on the basis of the colour of their skin. Several British software houses went public on their business dealings with South Africa, none more so than in CRL's Clem Chamber's famous 'all South Africans are bastards' press statement, but many others refused to comment, and certain companies exploited the situation by increasing their supplies to fill the boycott vacuum.

According to the Commission For Racial Equality, racist attacks have increased by over 25% in the past 12 months . . . not in South Africa, but in Britain! Nationalist and Nazi organisations are actively recruiting in school playgrounds and at football matches, and even in towns like Bournemouth the Ku Klux Klan has announced a membership drive. Perhaps you don't think that this has got much to do with computer games. Maybe the fact that there are only a handful of non-whites in British computing seems natural to you.

> *'To live anywhere in the world today and be against equality because of race or colour, is like living in Alaska and being against snow.'*
> ***William Faulkner, 1965***

There is no such thing as a genuine British race, except for a few Celts who speak Welsh and the Isle of Man TT. The rest of us are made up from mongrel matings of Scandinavians, Saxons, Romans, Normans, Gypsies, Jews, Huguenots, Irish, Germans, Poles, West Indians, Pakistanis, Vietnamese, you name it. We are still foreign scum living on a little island off the North-West coast of a tired old continent called Europe. Some of us have got black skins, and there have been large numbers of British-born blacks living on this island for well over 300 years. A generation ago the British Minister of Health, a man named Enoch Powell, was one of those Government Ministers who encouraged foreigners to come to Britain to make up for labour shortages in the health service, transport, industry and manufacturing. Many of them had black skins. Yet in this generation the stereotyped Computer Game Hero is almost always a musclebound white guy, who looks like something out of a Nazi propaganda poster for the perfection of a Germanic master race of mindless pale veal steaks. In certain games, the fact that you come across a wog, gook, nigger, slope, kaffir or coon is sufficient reason to kill him.

LUTHER DE GALE

. . . is boss of Konami. Because I am not very British I asked him what being a British software mogul was like for him.

MEL - Are you racially abused?

LUTHER - All the time. But I've become oblivious to racist comments. People who insult me like that are to be pitied, they suffer from a bankruptcy of thoughts, they're making up for their own deficiencies. It's the scapegoat syndrome. It used to be the Jews, now its us. But I can avoid that now, I've got status and position.

MEL - You're a successful man, you've got some muscle in the software industry. Why don't you go in for positive discrimination? I mean why don't you make the hero of one of your games black?

LUTHER - I don't believe in positive discrimination, no. I wouldn't feature a black hero for the sake of it, it could affect sales.

MEL - Are you kidding! Do you really mean that?

LUTHER - I always mean what I say, but you misunderstand me. Frank Bruno's Boxing, yes. That's highly appropriate and very successful, otherwise I'll take each game on its merits.

MEL - But that's what happens all the time to black kids, they get sent to the sports field to play soccer or do a bit of boxing, while the whites train to be accountants.

LUTHER - Look, a lot of black kids accept the path of least resistance. At 15 or 16 they stop being 'British' when morons tell them that they're not. Some decide to fight.

MEL - And did you fight?

LUTHER - I knew what I wanted when I was 16. I planned it. My schoolmates hadn't got a clue what it was all about. They were into playground status, and when they left school they helped their dads on the street market barrow, or became bus conductors. You see there was no family or generation connection then with business, careers, not like the Asians, their whole culture is a network of helping their kids get on.

MEL - So you fought to get where you are now?

LUTHER - Sure, I had to fight, so I fought.

MEL - Why don't we see black faces at computer trade fairs, why don't we see black faces in the magazines?

LUTHER - It's funny really, the stereotype thing. You know, the best players in our simulator at the last Olympia show were all black. A black guy was the only one to get all the way through it. But you're right, a black face at one of those shows is about as common as a ruby in a bag of beans.

MEL - Are you offended by racist games? Personally offended.

LUTHER - I don't live in a tree Mel, I don't have a bone through my nose! No, I don't get offended. There was that one about Livingstone, by Alligata I think, it used every stupid colonial prototype there is. Cannibals, white supremacy, pathetic. The artwork was just so dated, and surely we've moved away from all that by now. Games like that just reinforce the younger generation's image of blacks vis-à-vis status, but it's not funny. Like Irish jokes, they're not funny. It's obsolete.

MEL - In your latest game, *Jackal*, one of the four main characters, Bob, is a negro.

LUTHER - Sure, there's always at least one black in any good war film, except *Hamburger Hill*, where they're all blacks. But to tell the truth, it's a coincidence, *Jackal* came from Japan.

MEL - Ah so.

LUTHER - Racist!

> *'There are no 'white' or 'coloured' signs on the graveyards of battlefields.'*
> ***John F Kennedy, 1963***

Alligata's Doctor Livingstone stereotype lives on in games like *Jack The Nipper II; Coconut Capers* from Gremlin Graphics. I mentioned this to

PRESS ANY KEY

Gremlin's . . .

IAN STEWART

IAN - We had to deport Jack The Nipper to Australia; he picked his nose! It just happened that be bailed out over the jungle.
MEL - Where the natives are a bit thick, and live with the monkeys in the trees, and I think they even wear bones for decoration. That's racist.
IAN - No.
MEL - Why not?
IAN - Because it's only a game. It's a piece of fantasy.
MEL - But the game is set in the present time, why have you used old racial cartoon images like this?
IAN - I will not be drawn into anything other than that it's total fantasy. There's elephants with saxophones for God's sake!
MEL - And I'm saying that you use racist artwork.
IAN - And I'm not prepared to rise to your bait. Let me tell you about our 'Alternative Games'. They feature 'going up the wall', or in the case of your sense of humour 'going to the wall', and 'the sack race'. Maybe I should have made that one about sacking computer magazine staff!

> *'God is white'*
> ***Jean Genet, 1958***

" . . . there are a lot of ignorant people in computing." KEVIN WILLIAMS

KEVIN WILLIAMS

. . . is the Development Manager for Andromeda, he wears a suit but he also wrote the storyboard for *Judge Death*, perhaps he suffers an identity crisis:
MEL - What colour are you, Kevin?
KEVIN - I call myself 'shaded', I think I'm number 16 on the Dulux colour chart. When I go running I get paler, when I'm relaxed I turn darker.
MEL - Are you relaxed now?
KEVIN - I feel quite dark at the moment, now you mention it. But as for racism in the computer circus, if you're black but your pocket is full of money, you're exempt. I'm half black, does that count?
MEL - You only need a half-full pocket. Forgetting fantasy games for a minute, why are all the 'simulation' type computer games about white guys?
KEVIN - Stereotypes and prejudice. Do you know in *Football Manager* there wasn't one black face, not even in the crowd! And then there's the rubbery lips and spiky hair bit in certain artwork. This industry covers it up well, by sweeping it all under the carpet, but racism underlies everything. They don't call me names to my face, but I hear the snide comments. When they get into their alcoholic stupors their tongues loosen up, and then all the racism comes out.
MEL - Are you a racist?
KEVIN - Yeah, I loath all Americans! Only joking you guys, I honestly think that EA are wonderful people, at least they're taking British software seriously. Everyone is a racist to some extent, everyone fears people that are different from themselves, and it gets twisted into stupid prejudices. If you happen to be an Irish programmer you get a continual stream of garbage poured into your ears, because the British are afraid that the Irish have outgrown them. Software houses down South are prejudiced against Northerners, I see it all the time. In your Without Prejudice columns in *Computer Trade Weekly* you never stopped making fun of minority groups, and your Under The Baudwalk bits of ZZAP!64 are full of digs at people with foreign names.
MEL - Guilty, but I'm trying to get my readers to question their own attitudes.
KEVIN - I wonder how many of them realise that. You might also be feeding their ignorance, and there are a lot of ignorant people in computing.
MEL - So it's not just colour prejudice in the computer business?
KEVIN - We use Hungarian programmers, they hate the Yugoslavs, and the Yugoslavs hate the Poles, and the Poles hate the Germans . . .
MEL - And everyone hates the Jews, right?
KEVIN - I don't hate you, Mel.
MEL - Maybe I hate myself. When will we begin to see a realistic percentage of non-whites in computer games? 75% of the world is black, brown, yellow, red . . .
KEVIN - There is one red, or at least a half-breed Indian who's the hero of Mattel's *Lonestar*, and I am beginning to see the occasional tinted person in games adverts, *California Games*, and that *Street Sport Baseball* from US Gold/Epyx has got a shaded catcher squatting by the trash cans. But to be honest, there's one hell of a long way to go. Anyway, where do you come on the Dulux colour shades chart?
MEL - Me? I'm equal quarters German, Irish, Polish and Portsmouth. That makes me a 57, I think.

> *'There are many humorous things in the world, among them the white man's notion that he is less savage than the other savages.'*
> ***Mark Twain, 1897***

Mind you, my pedigree is nothing compared to the lady over at Headlines . . .

NADIA LINDA GAJADHARSINGH

. . . is a Latvian, Trinidadian, Italian, Russian, French, Estonian, Austrian. I'm impressed.
MEL - Have you come across such a thing as a racist computer game?
NADIA - Yes, computer games can be racist in the stereotyping of characters. It's obvious that relegating non-white people to certain roles will influence kids eventually.
MEL - So what can be done about it?
NADIA - We have to decide what the computing industry sets out to achieve. If we want it to be educational, then we would have to follow the lead of children's books. These days they've made real progress, and they seek to increase awareness of other nationalities, depict them as they really are, and treat them with the respect they deserve. But I think the computer industry sets out to entertain rather than to educate. And racial awareness is just not happening.
MEL - There's talk of censorship about. What do you reckon to that?
NADIA - If we want to make moral decisions about which games kids should play then sure, we would have to bring in censorship to deal not only with racism but also sexism and, more importantly, violence. Exactly what you were tackling in your previous GAMES MACHINE feature.
MEL - I still hope that self-censorship is the answer. Once you begin by censoring ideas, you end by rounding up all the 'undesirable elements' and having them shot. But suppose it comes to censorship, what would happen then?
NADIA - I can't help thinking that this would leave some software houses fumbling for ideas for games. Not that that's a reason why it shouldn't happen. But as minors do make up the majority of the market really we do have a moral responsibility towards them.
MEL - You told me yesterday that someone called you a little piccaninny. How do you handle racism personally?

More a woman than a 'little piccaninny': Headlines's Nadia Gajadharsingh



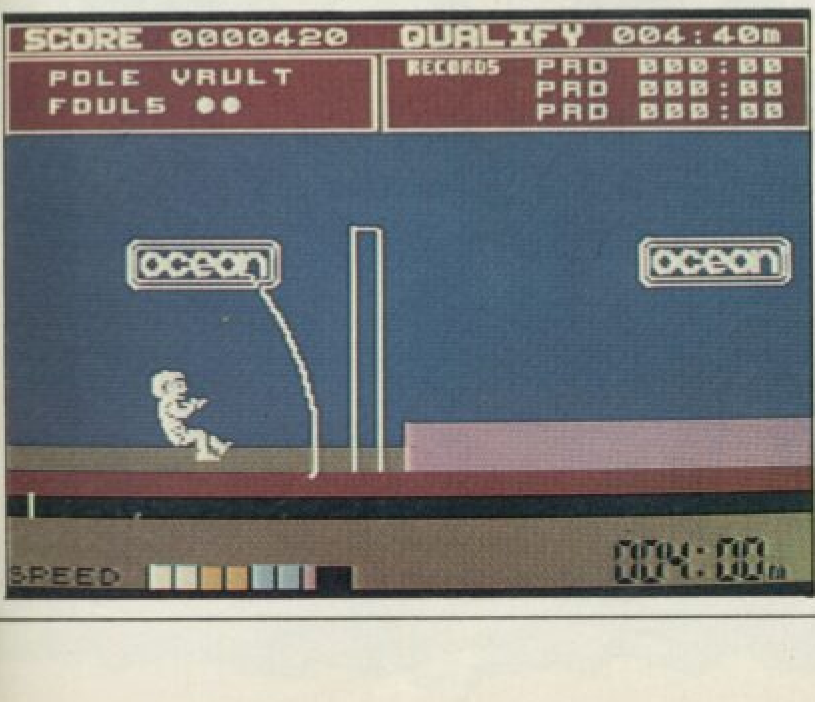
NADIA - Racism in my life? Well, a bigger problem for me is whether I get taken seriously as a woman, and not seen as someone employed merely to brighten up a male-dominated software industry, or to do the typing.
MEL - Who does the typing at Headlines?
NADIA - Simon Harvey.
MEL - Haha. Why did you change your name, that really puzzles me?
NADIA - I sometimes wonder how people who don't know me personally react to my name. I've simplified and shortened my name to cut down barriers, that's all, it's no big deal. I want to make sure I'm more approachable. To answer your question about racism in my life, I'm blissfully unaware of any racism directed towards me by people in the software world. Maybe I have an easier time because no one can pin a nationality to me.
MEL - What nationality are you, Nadia?
NADIA - I see myself as a globe with a little flag on most continents. I'm very proud of my hotchpotch background.

> *'The negro is superior to the white race. If they don't amalgamate with the richer blood of the blacks they will die out and wither away, in skinniness.'*
> ***Henry Ward Beecher, 1866***

"We never looked at the colour of their skin, it was the colour of their money that counted." CHRISTIAN PENFOLD

CHRISTIAN PENFOLD

. . . is best remembered in his guise of The PiMan, hurling abuse at the crowd during computer shows, often as not sprinkled with sexist, ageist, classiest and especially racist epithets. He was my partner in Automata for five years.
MEL - Hello PiMan. Why did we see few black kids at the computer fairs?
CHRISTIAN - They were all off black marketeering. I do remember one though, total nutter, he took over our stand and started blowing a bugle. I put him on 10% commission and he was bloody fantastic, worked like a black!
MEL - If I didn't know you better, I'd say you were deliberately trying to be provocative, as it is you are a very wonderful human being and a racist bastard, aren't you?
CHRISTIAN - Don't blackball me, that's blackmail. Just like those lousy wholesalers who I upset so much that they blacklisted us.
MEL - Ah, I see. What you're saying is that even in our colloquial language we use words like black market, blacklist, blackball and blackmail when we are talking about antisocial behaviour, and that this enforces racial prejudice even as we speak.
CHRISTIAN - What the bloody hell are you on about, you old bugger.
MEL - Maybe not then. But we were just like all the other software houses, weren't we. We never had any non-white characters in our games.
CHRISTIAN - Of course we did! Don't you remember Rastapiman, he was in every advert we ever did for over two years! Mind you, he was only a token black, I had him fed into a slot machine. Seriously mate, when we were in the business together we never looked at the colour of their skin, it was the colour of their money that counted. Tight-fisted bastards. Do you want to know what me favourite game is?
MEL - No.
CHRISTIAN - *Black To The Future*. Well laugh then you miserable sod.



The great Ocean whitewash job? Daley Thompson was certainly all white on the night in the Spectrum version of DT's Decathlon 1984. Or was it a programming convention?

The biggest computing jamboree of the year is undoubtedly the PCW Show, formerly held at Olympia, but next September moving to Earl's Court. The man who organises it is named . . .

MIKE BLACKMAN

MEL - Don't you get a lot of idiots like me taking the piss out of your name?
MIKE - The odd person will have a crack at my name, like you, you're very odd. I think it's an advantage, nobody ever forgets who I am.
MEL - When you put on your annual show, there are only a handful of non-whites among the thousands that participate.
MIKE - Yes. And I don't know why, I really don't. It's down to the individual when it comes to success in running a software house. People like Luther de Gale will always succeed, it's nothing to do with their colour.
MEL - I'm not suggesting that, but is it in spite of the prejudice that their colour might evoke?
MIKE - I am an ambitious person. I make plans and set objectives and go about achieving them, it's nothing to do with colour. I'm lucky.
MEL - Do you mean to say that you have never been discriminated against in the software world because of your colour?
MIKE - It has never even occurred to me, really, it's never come up. To be honest with you I don't feel very strongly and this is the first time that I have ever discussed it with anyone.
MEL - Really?
MIKE - Really! I've never been abused in this industry. I wouldn't put money on the fact that there are no racists in computing, all I'm saying to you is that I have never experienced racism. People like Luther and I want to get on in life, we don't make a big thing about our colour, and we expect the same from anybody else.
MEL - Fine, you have made that very clear, and I find it very encouraging to hear you say that you have never run across a racist in this business. What about racial stereotypes in the games themselves? Do they matter?
MIKE - It doesn't bother me.
MEL - No, but does it matter?
MIKE - The companies that go in for that sort of thing have taken advantage of a media image, cannibals in the jungle and so on. I don't believe that they have done it deliberately. You always meet bigots in any walk of life, but I think that the image of black people in games is only a reflection of cartoon stereotypes.

I wanted to have my final interview with computer journalist Tania Yates, who contributed so wisely to my analysis of Sexism in Computer Games. Unfortunately, Tania is visiting her family in South Africa as I write this. Alternatively I thought about using one of my little chats with Jeffrey Archer, when he told me: 'The other day I said to my son, 'David's driver is a black'. I said it because I was in a hurry to describe the man. My son turned round to me and said: 'If you can tell me off for labelling people by their colour, I can tell you off for it'.'

He was right of course. We are all still guilty of that sort of thing to a greater or lesser extent. But I decided not to give little Jeffrey any more free publicity after all. Then I contacted my old friend Anil Gupta, formerly of Anirog and now of Anco, but Anil never ever goes into print. So I must respect his request for privacy, and I cannot print what he told me about his experiences in the industry of racism against him and his family except his last sentence: 'I detest all these things, but I'm not a hero like you. I try to survive my friend, it's a hard job.'

So I invited freelance programmer Colin Jones to have the last word.
MEL - You say that you're working on a socially aware game at the moment.
COLIN - That's right. It's non-violent, anti-sexist, and against all forms of racism. I'm calling it *Let's All Watch The Paint Dry* . . .

Two things have become clear to me while putting this wee piece together for you. First, as in every other aspect of living in Britain today, racism exists in the computer business. Secondly, the vast majority of whites I know deny it, and the handful of non-whites in computing dismiss it. Both of these facts worry me. So I'll ask the same question that I started with, gentle reader. Do you think it's natural that computer game heroes and the people that run the industry and attend the computer shows are nearly all white? Well, do you?

Next month Croucher rakes some real industry muck when he dives into the issue of underage child abuse. The kids who made it as software writers but lost their souls. The kids who were ruined by success and nearly lost their lives. Don't miss it.



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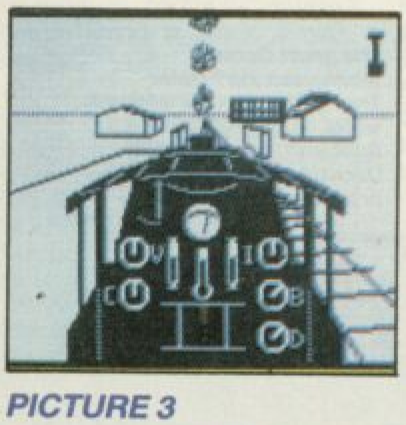
Hewson have enjoyed a run of successes for many years with a wide variety of game types, culminating in more recent months with some of the toughest arcade games available – and all big hits. Now the company is bringing out a compilation of four of their very best – ***Zynaps***, ***Exolon***, ***Rana Rama*** and ***Uridium Plus***. To celebrate the release, Hewson are offering a top prize in this competition of the latest portable Compact Disc/ radio/cassette player from Phillips, plus a copy of the compilation suitable for your 8-bit machine, and for 50 runners-up there are copies of the new compilation too.

Spectrum and Amstrad owners should be especially excited because ***Uridium Plus*** has never had a solus released on those computers – and it has translated very well indeed.

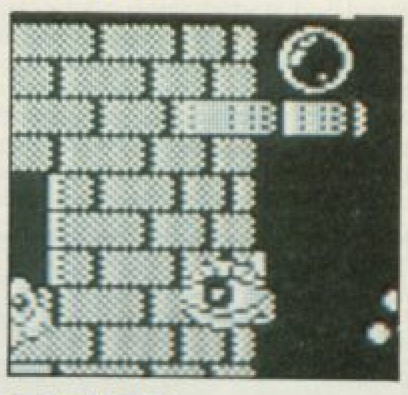
To have a chance of winning the competition, you will have to put your historical brains in gear, and correctly identify the four Hewson games pictured on the page. When you think you have the right answers, put them down on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope, together with your name, address and most importantly, **the machine you own** (Spectrum, Commodore 64/128 or Amstrad CPC), and send it to **SMASH IT UP WITH HEWSON COMP, The Games Machine, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** *to arrive no later than February 25.*

Identify the four Hewson games from the pictures below

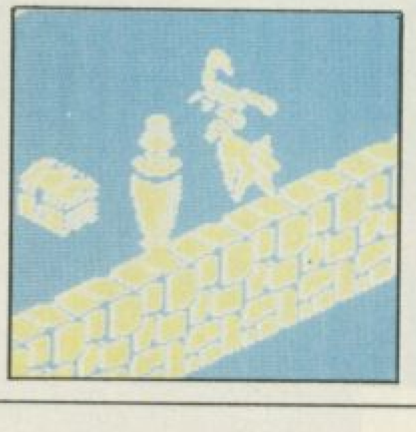
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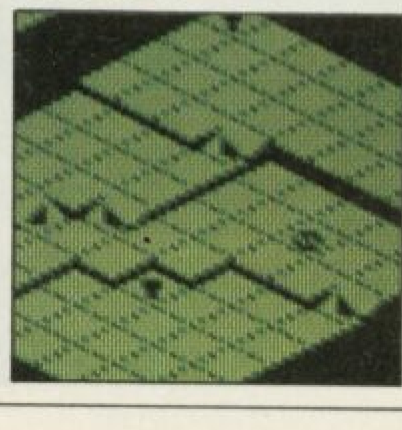
PICTURE 2



PICTURE 3



PICTURE 4



Introducing ActionSoft!

Colonel Jack Declares War to Improve Strategy/Action Software

Colonel Jack Rosenow, President of ActionSoft, is out to turn the simulation software industry upside down:

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Colonel Jack Rosenow, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)



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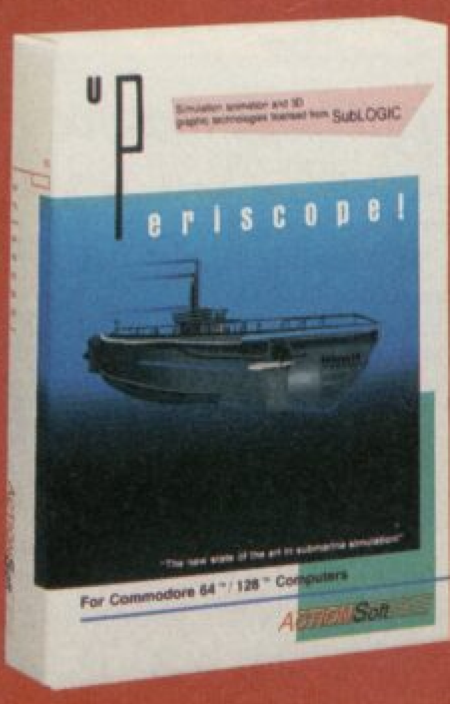






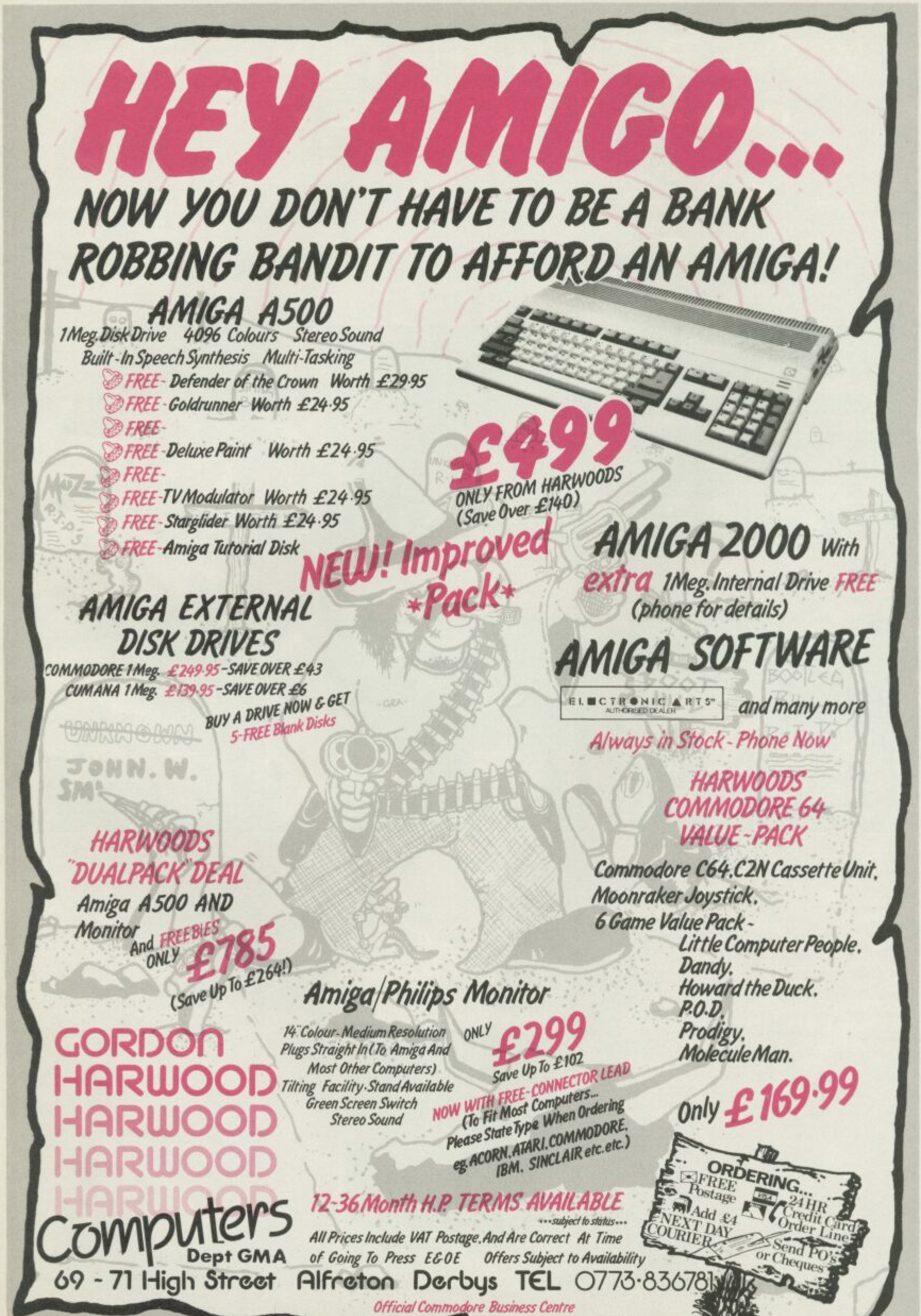


See Your Dealer...
Up Periscope! is available on disk for the Commodore 64/128 computers (suggested retail price £19.95) and for IBM PC-compatible computers (£24.95). For direct orders please include 55p for shipping. Visa, Access, and Personal cheques accepted.



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REVIEWS

As traditional as Turkey, the onslaught of software over the Christmas period is legendary. The Christmas lead up 1987 was no exception with a lot more software than anyone expected – unfortunately a good percentage proved to be far from satisfactory. There are 37 review pages in this issue (including the adventure pages), examining 44 games. Obviously this does not cover all the games released over the recent Christmas period – we could not give every single product a review due to the sheer volume released. However, what you will find are detailed, informative and intelligent reviews of products launched in the latter part of the season.

LAUNCHING INTO '88

So, what of the year to come? We're all placing our bets on the Atari ST computer series to do big business this year with a lot of new and innovative 16-bit software releases. The general standard of Amiga games should improve, and we have already seen a growth in the number of games. To date, very few Amiga games have really taken the machine's potential very seriously, That ought to be put right in 1988. Where does that leave the 8-bit market? Probably much the same as last year – providing a solid base for games development, and one on the Spectrum that should prove interesting as the rumours of a real alternative Spectrum clone grow.

In the review section next month we should have finished versions of ST *Buggy Boy* and *Space Harrier*, *Road Wars* on nearly everything, *Rastan Saga* from Ocean, and something really special to look forward to is Rainbird's 16-bit *Carrier Command*, with a look in on the Spectrum version too.

LEAD REVIEWS

PLATOON

The gamesplaying highlight has to be **Ocean**'s film licence *Platoon* – a superb combination of of action and adventure scenes. Excellent packaging, and probably the best thing to emerge from Ocean since *Wizball*.

PAGE 59

UMS

From **Rainbird** comes the most exciting advance in strategy software. *Universal Military Simulator* can create any battle, anywhere (or anywhen) with any weapons. Why it was worth 96%, highest TGM rating yet, can be discovered in the extensive review on . . .

PAGE 40

JINXTER

Magnetic Scrolls do it again with their third release through **Rainbird**. The story revolves around the search for pieces of a charm scattered throughout a land smitten by bad luck – fortunately you can't die, which should please a lot of people.

ADVENTURE PAGES

HUNTER'S MOON

Fourth release from **Thalamus**, again only for the Commodore 64/128, takes great shoot-'em-up action into psychedelic space. Written by **Martin Walker** the stylish graphics and fine gameplay make it a worthy 90%.

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MATCH DAY II

Jon Ritman and **Bernie Drummond**'s sequel to the highly popular *Match Day*, released nearly three years ago. Featuring new moves and a diamond deflection system, this is the best football game devised yet.

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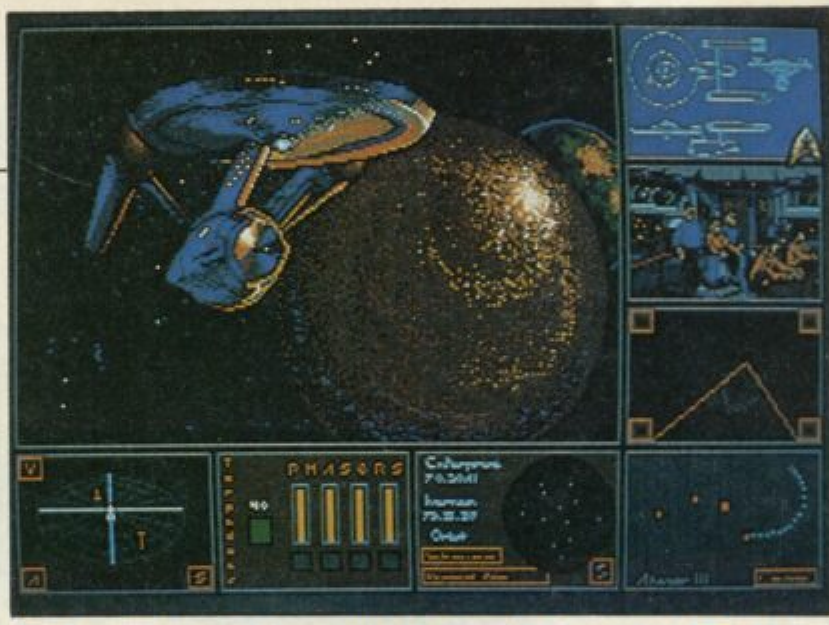
REVIEWS SUMMARY

PRESS ANY KEY

WHOOPS SCOTTY'S

STAR TREK
Firebird

ATARI ST ONLY



The Enterprise is now in standard orbit around the planet Atari ST – at last

Star Trek first appeared on American TV on 8 September 1966 and ran for three seasons – a total of 79 shows in all. It never really died, thanks to innumerable reruns, tremendous fan adulation and its promotion to the big league of feature films of which there have been four to date. Now a new TV series has been completed, though it won't be seen on British TV for several years because the buy-in cost is too high, instead you will be able to hire the programmes on video tape. *Star Trek* was a natural for computer games and there have been many unofficial attempts, especially on the Spectrum. Shortly before Christmas 1986, Firebird announced they had secured the official licence and work had begun on the game. However, as John Gilbert detailed in THE GAMES MACHINE Issue 2 (Licensed To Knock 'Em Dead), Firebird ran into delays, and only now can we assess the results of their efforts.

The Federation has designated a region of space (turn left at Saturn and cruise in warp eight for 20 light years) as a quarantine zone. Their reason is a well guarded secret, but it appears that the crew of any Federation Starship entering the zone mutinies and turns renegade.

To no-one's surprise the Klingons are involved; up to their usual unfriendly antics, they have been experimenting with a particular type of Dilithium crystal which can act as a telepathic amplifier when hooked up to a major power source (such as a Starship warp drive). Any sentient beings within the thoughtwave range soon find themselves open to Klingon telepathic suggestion, even from a distance of light years.

Your mission, Jim, should you decide to accept it, is to enter this zone, seek out and destroy the Klingon Psimitter within a time limit of five years and avoid upsetting too many Romulans in the process.

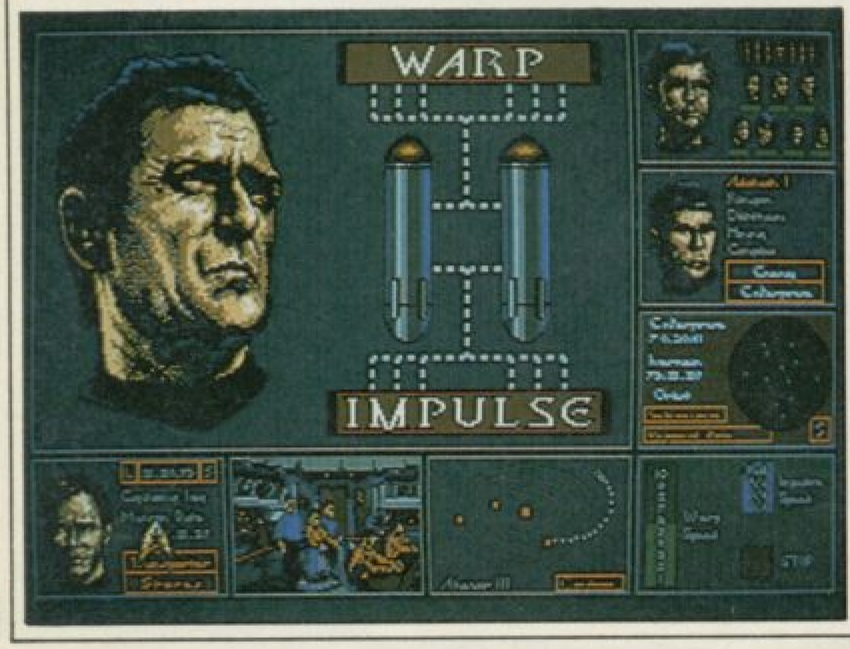
BEING LOGICAL

The very first noticeable effect in *Star Trek* the game is the speech at the start of the loading sequence, it's Kirk's digitised dulcets ringing out with 'Space, the final frontier . . . ' etc. Then there's Dave Whittaker's music – a rather dubious rendition of what is obviously the TV theme, but quite jolly nonetheless.

Once loaded, you are presented with a multivision screen, the primary display area consisting of very attractive representations of Kirk, Spock, Scott, McCoy, Sulu, Uhura and Chekov all at their end-of-episode stations on the Enterprise's bridge. The L-shaped border to the right and below is filled with seven secondary screens which either depict individual crew members or some of the Enterprise's systems. To change the primary display you simply move the cursor (mouse or joystick controlled) to one of the available twelve secondary screens required and click.

Each crew member has a different function, for example Spock keeps you informed about the state of the Enterprise at any given moment and also offers details on planets and enemy ships within the zone. He, too, has sampled speech and announces that he will never understand humans, usually just when the life support systems fail due to a misjudgement on the player's part. When you are still a novice at the game, this message begins to irritate after hearing it for the eighth or ninth time, and doubtless the kind of language directed back at the verbose Vulcan is unlikely to aid his understanding one iota.

Can the engines take it? Can your ST take it?



KLINGON BOLDLY

There are no cast surprises in fact, so it's comforting to discover good ol' Scotty in charge of the 'She'll noo take it cap'n' engines, Sulu in the navigator's chair, Chekov 'Locked on target' as weapons officer, Bones in the Medical Bay and Uhura relaying any messages she may pick up.

Captain James T Kirk controls the important bits of the game such as the pause button (very necessary for those panicky moments when the Enterprise with only 50% power is confronted by six Klingon Birds Of Prey . . . the player is given the opportunity of making the ultimate cup of tea before dying), the load/save option, the time and the contents of the stores. He is also in charge of the transporter for those all-important landing parties.

Star Trek the computer game is enormous, comprising many enemy ships, hundred of planets to visit and various ways of defeating the nefarious Klingon plans. To go into too much detail about how the game works and what is possible within it would take up far too much of the final frontier; suffice to say it is chiefly a game of strategy with a pinch of shoot-'em-up and includes all the elements of the *Star Trek* we have come to know and love, warp speed, photon torpedoes, the transporter and so on. It should keep any player prepared to persevere busy for weeks.

When *Star Trek* first beamed aboard THE GAMES MACHINE we have to report that lethargy ruled; it appeared rather boring and, presentation aside, a disappointment. However to review it fairly, extensive playing was instigated. We soon found that once some achievements within the game had been accomplished a spark of interest ignited urging us on. The deeper into the game one travels the better it gets until, eventually, in the same way that *Elite* grabbed the games-playing world, *Star Trek* grips the player by his Klingons and drags him through many sleepless nights to the ultimate goal of bringing peace and harmony to the universe once more.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95
There are no plans for other versions of Star Trek, **which makes you wonder how Firebird ever intend getting their huge investment back; it is strange that they are not contemplating at least an Amiga** Star Trek. **With six different ways to complete the game and with the massive universe created in it,** Star Trek **provides plenty to do, but we did think that after several hours play the variety of do-able things began to look a bit thin. However, it is certainly a lot better than than its first impression implies.**
OVERALL 71%

"It should keep any player prepared to persevere busy for weeks."

FORD EVERY STREAM

CHAMONIX CHALLENGE

Infogrames

Infogrames are releasing 16-bit software thick and fast lately and while doing so are beginning to encompass many and varied subjects for their games to tackle. No longer can the company be thought of as having an adventure bent, especially taking into account one of their latest releases, *Chamonix Challenge*. This simulation promises to take the player to breathtaking heights as a daring mountaineer. Imagine it; the experience of climbing the peaks of the French Alps without the physical drawbacks of freezing conditions, vertigo, hidden crevasses or blind panic. All these features are included in the game and may be enjoyed from the comfort of home.

At the start the game presents several climbing routes of varying difficulty and one or more may be chosen, so may the starting time and whether the climb is to be attempted in summer or winter. Climbing in wintry conditions is far more dangerous than in summertime, and the same is true of nighttime. Choice selection is icon-driven (joystick or keys).

Every mountaineer must pay close attention to equipment needed for an ascent and *Chamonix Challenge* has a wide choice from which to select. Care must be exercised during this phase to ensure that you have everything required to ensure success whilst at the same time not loading yourself down with unnecessary items such as the microwave (?) or Walkman. Chosen items are automatically stored in the rucksack except for the main climbing gear – pitons, ropes and karibiners (a device for retrieving lost ropes) – which is held in the hands ready for use.

Once the player is happy with the route, time and equipment he may begin the climb.

UP, UP AND AWAY

Your experience of a lifetime begins in a suitably easy way on the relatively flat and picturesque glaciers, the most difficult part of which is the walking – and it's the first time you encounter what becomes the central concern of *Chamonix Challenge* . . . rhythm. It is difficult to establish the rhythmic control required to get the mountaineer going and to keep him moving. One mistake in the left/right rhythm and the guy falters and stops; this rather odd control for such a simple task is at first very frustrating, then it becomes tedious and eventually (when eager to get onto the slopes) just plain annoying.

However easy the glacial landscape may look there are dangers. The player is given warning of the presence of crevasses either by a small dip in the snow or a very precarious-looking ice bridge. When



Tackling the vertical rockface: nearly there . . . ST screen

confronted with a suspicious section of snow a quick prod with a walking stick determines whether it is safe to walk over or not – if it isn't the ground collapses and a deep crevasse is revealed. This has to be jumped and pixel-perfect accuracy is required if an unnecessarily long climb or a quick death are to be avoided.

The next stage is usually a snowy slope, these are generally quite easy although they do vary greatly in length. The gradients are not too steep and again rhythm is the way to success. Never leave your man in a state of insecurity on these slopes, do not take a rest unless his feet are well dug in and his ice picks are secure or he falls.

ON THE FACE

The third and most difficult stage of *Chamonix Challenge* is rock climbing. Viewed straight on, it shows the climber, back to the player, clinging to the rockface he's ascending. First problem here is to avoid the falling boulders which descend as soon as the scene appears which requires some nifty left/right footwork. It's really a randomising device and can be unfair inasmuch as once the climber has moved to one side he cannot move back and is stuck with that starting point to begin climbing. However if you are lucky enough to have a decent start (and you are wearing the right shoes) the actual climbing is extremely time consuming, addictive, interesting and even exciting.

The climber's four limbs may be moved one at a time and if they get a decent hold a little hand or foot icon appears, if the grip is unsafe the icon flashes. When at least three holds are secure you can move up and look for further holds to continue the ascent. Whatever is held in inventory may be used to assist, the piton, chocks, karibiner and rope are especially helpful.

Throughout the game items may be taken from or returned to the rucksack if the climber is in a fairly secure situation – such as on a flat surface or strapped to a slope – and most of these are needed during the climb to combat phases of hunger, tiredness, cold – even heat – that are encountered.

The game is multi-load (which will result in some tedium for cassette users) with a thoughtful save/load position option. A particularly nice touch is the climber's face in closeup where his goggles show what obstacle he will come across on the next screen so that he may prepare himself.

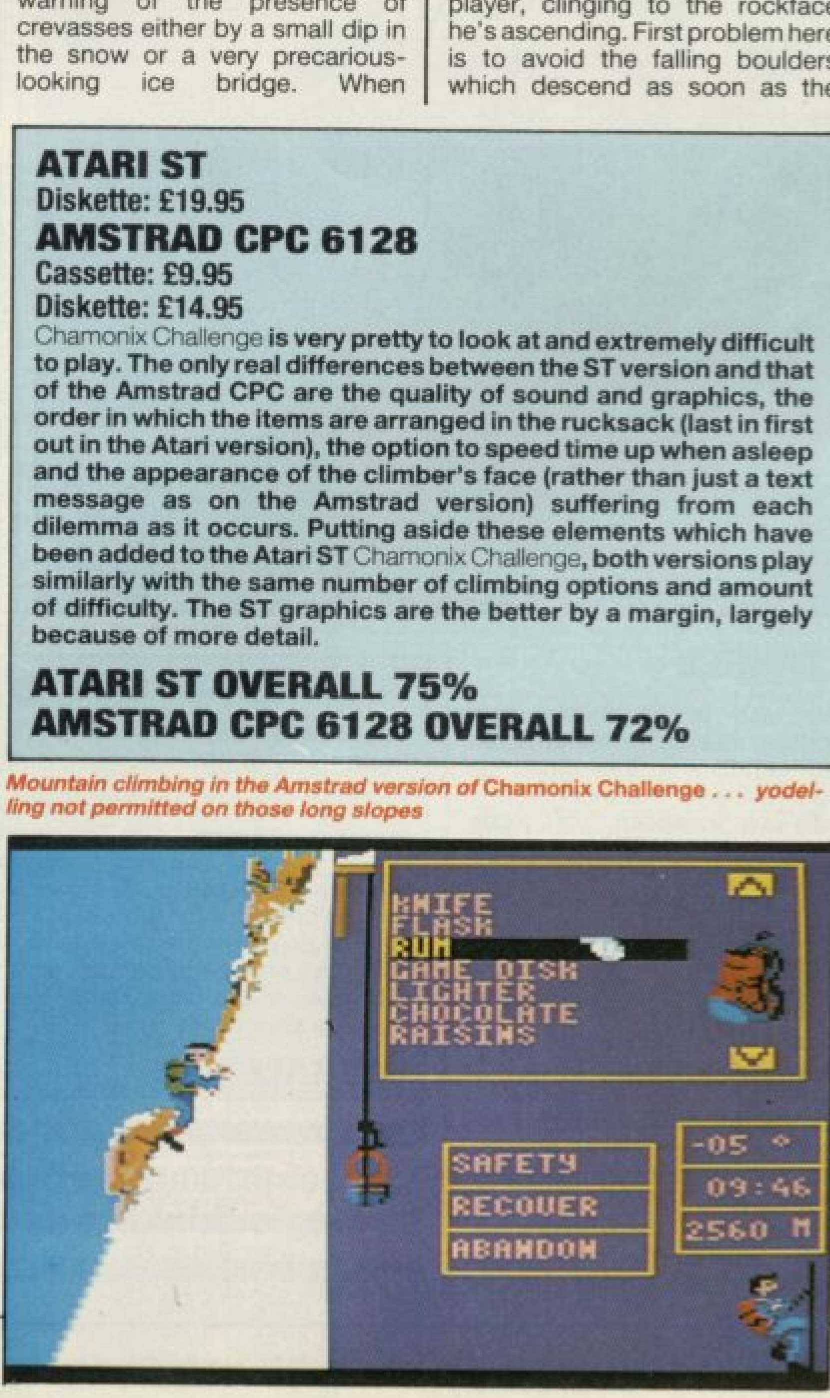
First reactions to *Chamonix Challenge* may well be of frustration and perhaps even boredom but perseverance is the name of the game and once all the idiosyncrasies are mastered that little blue sprite will be climbing, sliding and falling to his doom with the best of them.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95
AMSTRAD CPC 6128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Chamonix Challenge **is very pretty to look at and extremely difficult to play. The only real differences between the ST version and that of the Amstrad CPC are the quality of sound and graphics, the order in which the items are arranged in the rucksack (last in first out in the Atari version), the option to speed time up when asleep and the appearance of the climber's face (rather than just a text message as on the Amstrad version) suffering from each dilemma as it occurs. Putting aside these elements which have been added to the Atari ST** Chamonix Challenge**, both versions play similarly with the same number of climbing options and amount of difficulty. The ST graphics are the better by a margin, largely because of more detail.**

ATARI ST OVERALL 75%
AMSTRAD CPC 6128 OVERALL 72%

Mountain climbing in the Amstrad version of Chamonix Challenge *. . . yodelling not permitted on those long slopes*



COMMODORE 64
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

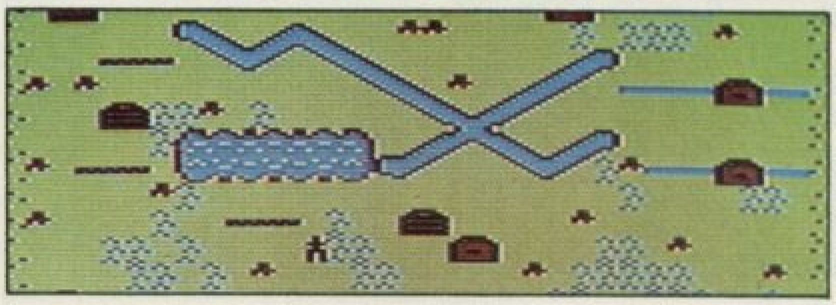
Cassette owners should be aware of multi-load problems when the Commodore version arrives, which Infogrames tell us should be soon, so watch out for an Update. They also insist that it will be every bit the same game as the versions we've reviewed here – but failed to say whether that would be closer to the ST or the Amstrad . . .

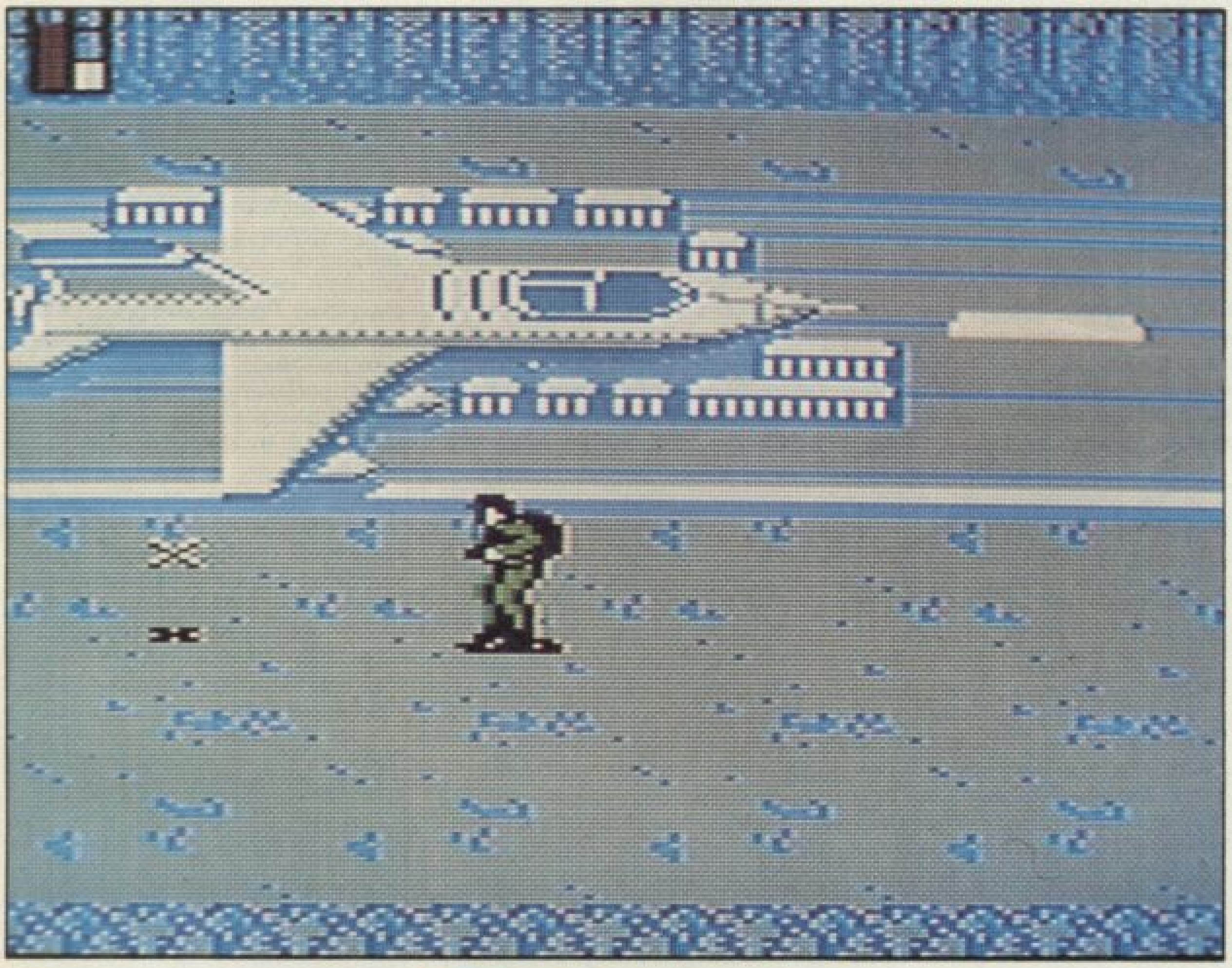
" . . . the actual climbing is extremely time consuming, addictive, interesting and even exciting."

BORNE TO KILL

AIRBORNE RANGER
MicroProse

MicroProse are generally better known for their realistic, high-quality simlulations (*Silent Service* and *Gunship* to name but two), but *Airborne Ranger* is a departure from their traditional releases and introduces arcade game elements. Described as a 'combat action simulator', *Airborne Ranger* is also easier to get into than the manual-bound flight simulations as, playing an American Ranger, you are dropped deep into enemy territory on one of twelve dangerous missions.





Any of the twelve missions listed can be attempted, and in any) order, but if you are feeling particularly brave, selecting **Campaign** gives you the chance to try all twelve in sequence. The missions in *Airborne Ranger*, which include rescuing prisoners and hostages, stealing a code book, and the more straightforward destroying of enemy installations, provide a neat mixture of strategic thinking and shoot-'em-up, although sheer speed is not the point of the game.

Upon selecting a mission, an Osprey transporter plane flies over the combat area towards the distant dropzone. Once the dropzone is reached, pods containing equipment and supplies are dropped first, then you parachute into the enemy camp and the mission begins!

A TANGLE

First task is to collect your supplies, as long as you dropped them carefully so they didn't fall into a ravine for instance. From a bird's-eye viewpoint, you move around the four-directionally scrolling enemy base with various defences and hazards coming into view. Machine-gun posts, turret bunkers and robotic defences fire at anything that moves, whilst enemy soldiers patrol the area, mercilessly pursuing your character if he is spotted. The area is a tangle of tank traps, barbed wire, snipers and minefields which hinder movement, while ditches, walls and trees provide cover from enemy fire.

Rocket launchers, grenades, knives and a rifle provide the firepower, the more potent weapons (including time bombs) being used to eliminate larger defences. The Ranger can crawl along ditches, walk around hazards and run across wastelands, although, realistically enough, the distance you can run depends on your health and the amount of supplies carried. A weapons sight for accurate firing constantly points in whichever direction the player is facing.

Stepping on mines, drowning in rivers or getting hit by flamethrowers inevitably results in death, but bullet wounds are slightly less serious; the supply pods carry first-aid kits to provide vital treatment for any damage taken. As it only takes three enemy bullets to kill, careful use of the medical kits is essential.

A map is available to assist navigation of minefields and other defence obstacles. Once the northern target has been reached and the , mission objective achieved, the Osprey craft can be recalled, boarded and the mission is complete. Successful Rangers can be saved to disk, any Rangers no longer needed being retired from duty (wiped from the disk in other words).

SPECTRUM 48/128
AMSTRAD CPC
ATARI ST
AMIGA

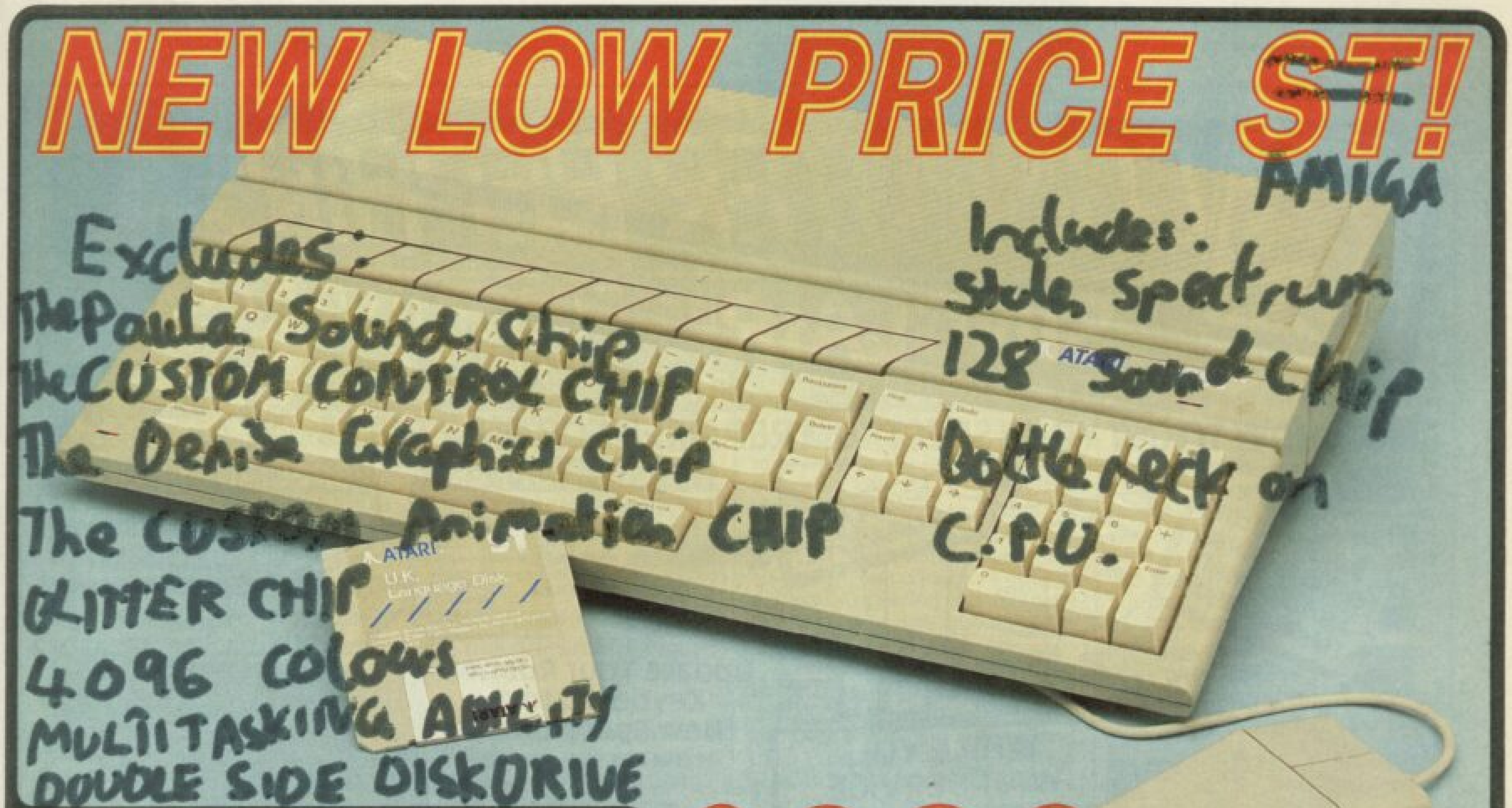
Versions for all these machines are being worked on, but as to release dates and prices, MicroProse are being unhelpfully vague – sometime in 1988, they say.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £14.95
Diskette: £19.95

Airborne Ranger **has similarities to the coin-op** Commando **in its graphics and playability. The good use of colour, effective sound, neatly defined and nicely animated sprites provide a highly realistic atmosphere. The gameplay may seem repetitive from time to time, but the variety of tasks to be performed and tactics to use give the game considerable depth. You may find the missions aren't too difficult to complete, but the game itself is playable, a challenge, and has a lot more scope than your average shoot-'em-up.**

OVERALL 82%

"Airborne Ranger **provides a neat mixture of strategic thinking and shoot-'em-up . . .**"



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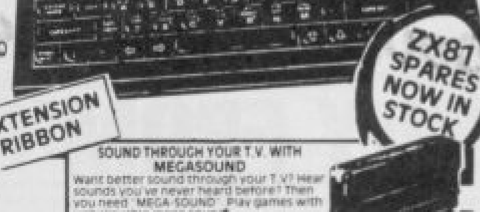
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DEFECTING

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

Grand Slam Entertainment

Tom Clancy's thriller novel *The Hunt For Red October* is a best-seller, has been the cause of a NATO embarrassment, a film is in the pipeline and, not surprisingly, the computer game rights have been snapped up. Bought by **Argus Press Software**, the game was included in the sale of all Argus computer game rights to **Stephen Hall**, managing director of Argus Press Software, who bought the company from his employers in mid-November and renamed it **Grand Slam Entertainment**. *Red October*'s coders, **Oxford Digital Enterprises** (ODE) have been responsible for the many computer versions of *Trivial Pursuit*, the *Adrian Mole* saga and, more recently, *Yes, Prime Minister*.

The story revolves around the highly advanced Soviet attack submarine, Red October. Its top-secret Caterpillar drive enables the sub to become virtually undetectable by sonar or radar. Red October's captain, Marko Ramius, intends to defect to America, taking the submarine with him. The Americans want her, the Russians want her back and they'll try anything to stop the defection, even if it means sinking the sub.

A row of icons control all the sub's functions (sonar, engines, weapons, periscope and maps) selected by using a hammer and sickle pointer. Sonar provides both plan views and a contour layout of the immediate area around the submarine, assisting in the navigation of deep-sea ravines and valleys. Enemy targets can be accurately positioned with sonar, although they are alerted to your position in the process. An on-board library of ship sonar signatures allows accurate identification of any contacts made.

SLOW BUT SURE

Red October's drive systems include standard nuclear drive, a diesel system and propellers. These provide faster speeds but are easier to detect by enemy sonar. The Caterpillar drive is extremely quiet but its use entails reducing speed to a third.

Amongst the weapons on board are 26 SeaHawk nuclear missiles (which, oddly, can't be launched – they have a place in the book, but presumably the programmers felt they had no part to play in the game) and the standard torpedoes. Torpedoes can be computer controlled or guided manually to their target by setting the torpedo's heading and elevation before firing.

The periscope icon offers infra-red or night views of surface activity, with the attack scope giving information on a target's heading, the data being fed into the sub's targetting computer. Whilst on the surface, Electronic Surveillance Measures allow you to intercept radio messages between enemy ships. This also updates the Atlantic Ocean map, displaying Red October's position and those last reported of the American and Russian fleets.

Changes in heading, depth and speed are made by pointing at the relevant icon. Once selected, the sub's course, depth or speed is altered to the new setting.

EVADING THE LAW

The Atlantic Ocean floor is coated with highly sensitive Captor Mines, which launch torpedoes at unidentified, fast-moving vessels such as Red October. Avoiding them involves laying flack as a decoy, changing to the Caterpillar drive (causing the torpedo to lose your signal) or the simple, but more dangerous, method of outrunning the torpedo.

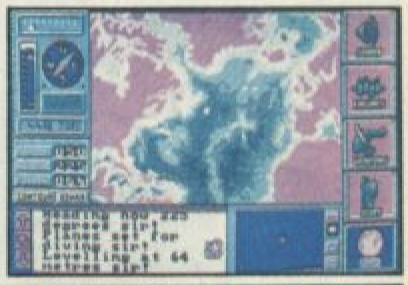


The seabed map on the ST

Under maritime law, Red October would be instantly reclaimed by the Russians if it entered a US port. To avoid this, there's a secondary task of rendezvousing with the American fleet off their coast, where the submarine can undergo a change of identity, enabling you to enter a US naval port and complete the final phase of the defection.

As the submarine traverses the treacherous deep sea ravines and valleys, strategic thought comes into play in avoiding sensors and deep probing anti-submarine vessels. Take too long to reach the Atlantic and more hostile vessels will arrive in the area, move too quickly and run the risk of activating the deadly Captor Mines.

The Hunt For Red October won't appeal to those seeking fast action, a shame really as it is a neatly constructed, polished release. The game can get very tense (as in any submarine warfare engagement) when the Russian Fleet is approaching fast and you're trying to negotiate deep sea hazards. Unfortunately, the beginning is immensely hard, just getting out into open sea is difficult enough due to the sheer number of Captor mines littering the sea bed. But despite the arcade appearance, it is placed firmly in the strategy game field, hence the lengthy periods of inactivity whilst sailing the Atlantic. Once out into the Atlantic, player interaction reduces to a minimum, just set the sub on its way and leave it to itself. This does spread the game's appeal somewhat thinly, even for strategists.



No, I said DOWN periscope! ST screen



ATARI ST

Diskette: £24.95

The icon system works well, the graphics are detailed and realistic (if a bit flickery) and the sound effects are highly convincing – the engine sounds in particular are varied and well done. Oddly, saving your present position to disk and reloading it removes any enemy vessels from the immediate area. A useful bug for getting out of tricky situations! Apart from the main task of reaching the American coast whilst avoiding enemy ships en route, there isn't enough to the game. Great presentation, and neatly executed too but with not an awful lot to it.

OVERALL 67%

IBM PC

Diskette: £24.95

The standard PC colour scheme of pink, purple and various shades of blue gives the game a fuzzy, peculiar look, especially when using the sonar underwater display, and it can be a touch unpleasant on the eyes after a long game. Otherwise it is neatly and effectively presented within the PC's restricted colours. With its high-speed operation the PC is the fastest version of the lot, responses to icon selections being both swift and accurate. But as is to be expected, sound effects aren't too varied, with beeps and a low growling noise (representing the sub's engines) being the order of the day. A word of warning: mouseless owners WON'T be able to play the game, which limits it in the already limited PC entertainment software scene.

OVERALL 62%

AMIGA

Diskette: £24.95

SPECTRUM 48/128
COMMODORE 64/128
AMSTRAD CPC

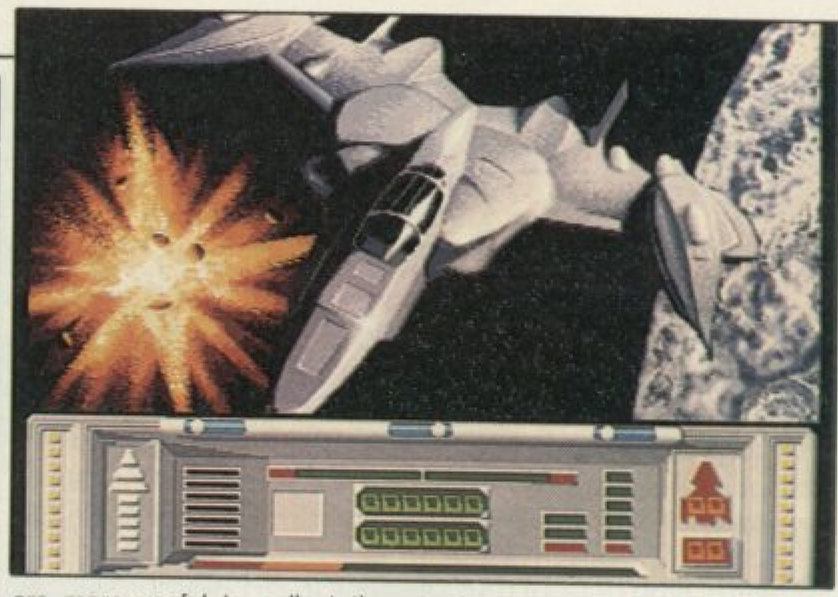
Cassettes: £14.95
Diskettes: £19.95

All other versions should be released by the time you read this, but were just too late to go into the review. Game elements are expected to be identical, with graphic representation appropriate to each machine's capabilities. Watch out for version updates next issue.

"The Hunt For Red October **is a neatly constructed, polished release.**"

SPACE MADNESS

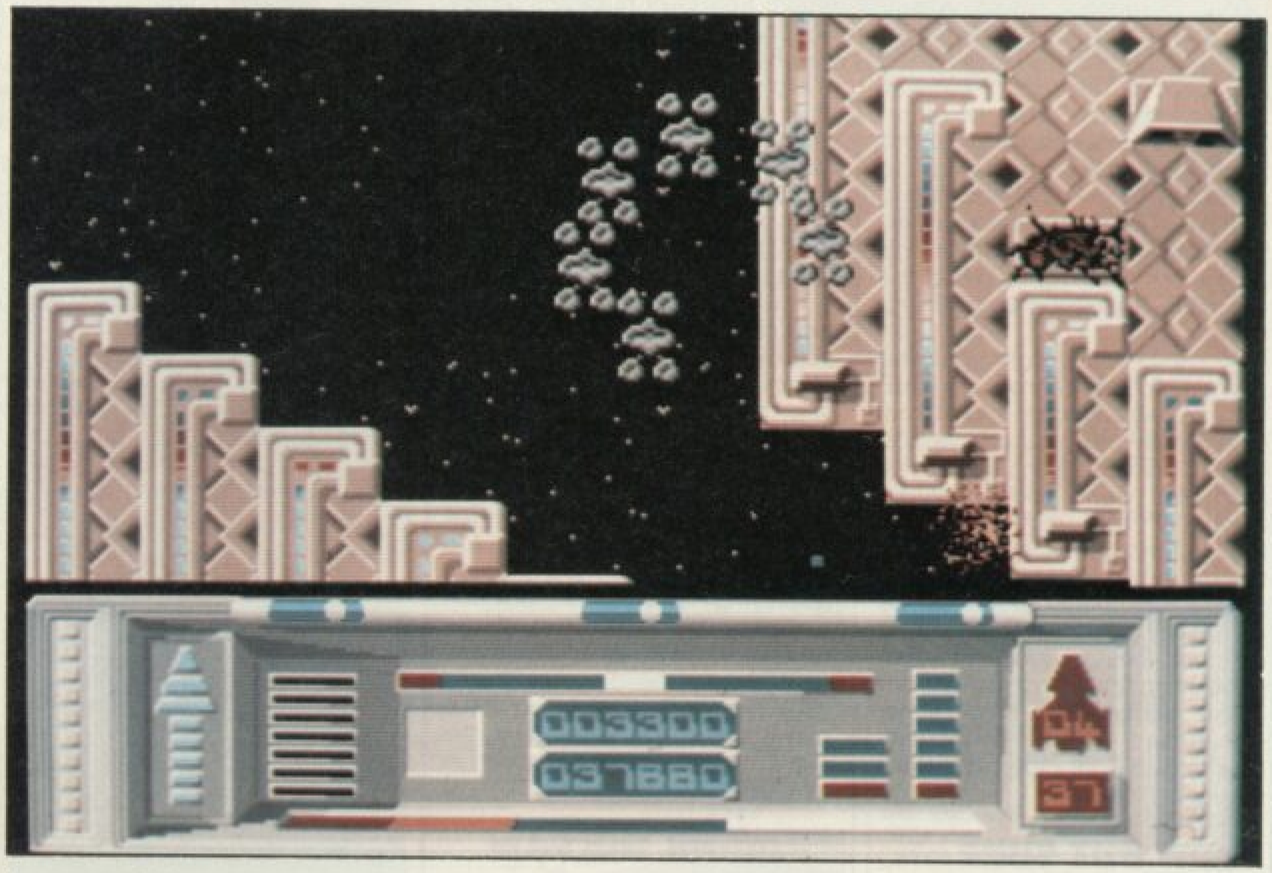
INSANITY FIGHT
Microdeal



Programmers **Christian Hiller** and **Jinn Six** are members of **Linel**, a Swiss software company about which it is very difficult to glean any information. Even the people at Microdeal knew little about their previous endeavours. Watch these pages, though, for more information about them. *Insanity Fight* appears to be Linel's first program to be released in this country, and for their first venture into the 16-bit market they have chosen the very safe subject of the vertically scrolling shoot–'em–up.

While loading the game you are presented with a very nice digitised picture of the Starfighter you are about to pilot, accompanied by a sound track reminiscent of a mid–European discotheque. If the ship reminds you a little of the *Parallax* aircraft, is that a bad thing? The next visual delight is a picture of the pilot's head in full battle regalia, who proclaims in sampled speech, as the visor drops down over his face, that the Starfighter is ready.

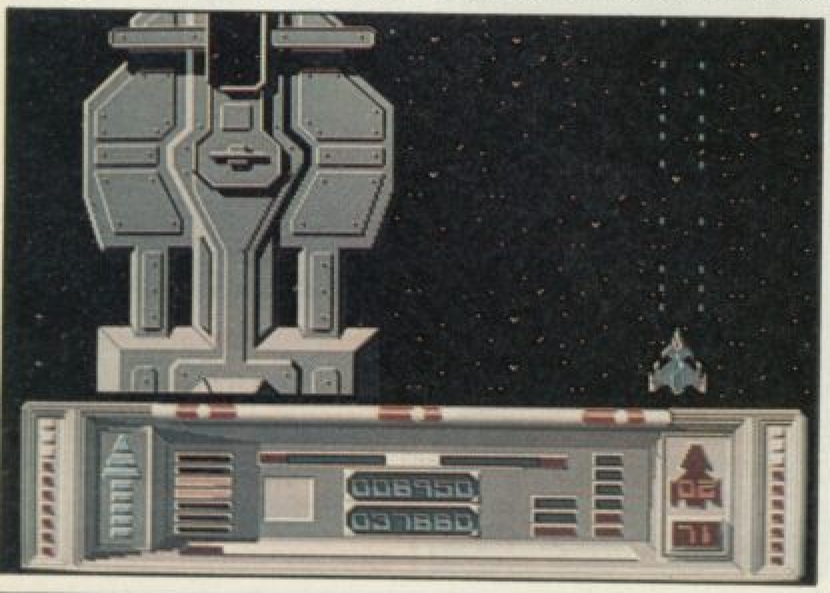
The in-game screen uses the cockpit controls as a border to the action, including indicators for alarm status (how close an enemy is), Starfighter's energy, lives remaining, enemies destroyed, the score, how much time is left for the current level and the craft's speed. There is also a radar system at the top of the panel which turns from blue to orange when a Mothership is about to attack, it also indicates from which area of the screen it will appear and allows the cowards among us to get out of the way, although the headstrong can attack.



The main aim of the game is to survive. Starfighter control is via joystick, and everything encountered must be either destroyed or avoided. Icons dotting the terrain, contain bonuses which are collected by flying over them. Some, such as turbo-speed, supershot weaponry, energy and mirroring, are more useful to collect than others.

Insanity Fight's speed is not for the squeamish – especially in turbo mode – and the enemy fighters attack in ever greater waves of ferocity. Each level increases in difficulty but not to the extent of persuading the player to give up and go home.

Shoot-'em-ups are ten-a-penny on the 8-bit machines and it looks like it's going that way for the more powerful computers; however, *Insanity Fight* is slick enough to keep its head above the competition for the foreseeable future at least.



AMIGA
Diskette: £24.95

Many would instantly recognise the Uridium **genre in** Insanity Fight**. The bas-relief graphics prove highly effective, the colours attractive and the sound FX punchy. The speed of the action can be breath-taking, and what with the enemy fighters and installations firing at you, the lethal forcefields, tall buildings and giant motherships, it's a fire-button-finger exercise in stamina.**

OVERALL 74%

ATARI ST

An ST release is imminent, although Microdeal are not prepared to commit themselves to a price as yet. With the exception of the digitised speech, Insanity Fight **on the ST will behave and look like its Amiga counterpart.**

"Insanity Fight**'s speed is not for the squeamish . . .**"

A SEVERED HAND

SLAINE

Martech

When the software industry gets its teeth into licensable material it doggedly hangs on to the theme until only the bare bones remain. Just when we thought they had probably squeezed *2000 AD* dry, along comes another character in his own computer game; this time its Clint look-a-like Slàine and his side kick Ukko. Martech have delved into the Dredd world before with *Nemesis The Warlock*, which did quite well for them even though comic fans were disappointed by the game. Melbourne House burned their fingers with *Judge Dredd*, and Piranha pulled theirs out of the fire smartish by withdrawing *Judge Death* for a rewrite. Earlier still, *Strontium Dog* and *Rogue Trooper* also proved to be weaker than their characters. What of *Slàine*?



Pronounced 'Slonn-ya' it's Martech's Amstrad incarnation of the 2000 AD character

Lyonesse has been in the grip of evil Drune Lords for many years. Now the last of them has been defeated in battle near the village of Tautega. Lyonesse waits and watches, wondering what powers will rule its destiny in the absence of the mighty Drunes. To this land awaiting a new balance of power, travels the warrior Slàine together with his companion Ukko, there to learn what he can of Tautega's history. The game offers only a hint that you need money to be able to get information from the locals. Only then will the obscure plot thicken sufficiently to discern an objective.





Slàine displays a very different style of game to the more usual graphic adventure software. Top left and right are the bounds of Slàine's imagination, within which his thoughts enter and leave. The idea is to move the cursor (via joystick or keys) onto the chosen command (move, status, attack, actions and so on) and click to capture it. The cursor itself is a severed hand, but with the unfortunate trend of trying to shock and revolt increasing in popularity this should perhaps come as no surprise, especially in dealing with a character as supposedly barbaric as Slàine.

SLIPPERY THOUGHTS

Choosing the thought Move, for example, presents exits available from Slàine's current location, after which you can then click on the choice of direction. Choosing Examine results in a list of objects available which may be looked at closely. The reasons and uses of the choices available are fairly straightforward throughout the game . . . if only the same could be said of the control method used to access these options. Slàine is obviously a quick thinker, and all thoughts enter his head and leave it quite rapidly and in a very antagonistic fashion. It states within the packaging that this so-called Reflex system is confusing at first but should soon become second-nature. The idea smacks of gimmickry and is decidedly detrimental to the gameplay. Rather than becoming second-nature, it runs the risk of becoming more annoying as inspiration arrives on how to gain progress in the game, and precious seconds are irritatingly wasted while trying to catch the 'thought' required to carry out an action.

Slàine's graphics are very good indeed, capturing the original bravura black-and-white comic drawings with great feel. But the game's depth is limited, probably because so much memory is eaten up by its flashy design, reportedly a problem with *Judge Death* version one. And there are one or two eyebrow-raising idiosyncrasies present, such as the ability to pick up the long oak bar but not take the food or ale off it, and the presence of the Thorin-style Ukko whose little messages grate before very long even though the option to hit him is mildly satisfying. *Slàine* is professionally presented and it is a shame that the mode of play lets it down.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £8.99

There are few real differences between the two versions other than the positioning of Slàine's 'thoughts'; On the Amstrad they are placed at the top of the screen and on the Spectrum version they're at the left. The feel of the game, its shallow depth and difficult control method are similar in both versions.

OVERALL 45%

COMMODORE
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £12.99

Expected at any moment, no significant differences are expected, certainly not graphically as the licence depends heavily on the comic-style drawings.

" . . . the Reflex system smacks of gimmickry and is decidedly detrimental to gameplay."

PRESS ANY KEY

WAR IN THE PACIFIC

GUADALCANAL

Activision

Alan Bird and **Alan Steel** are no strangers to wargames, having previously produced the best-selling, chillingly realistic nuclear wargame *Theatre Europe*. Now, moving away from the modern day environment, they've turned their sights back to World War II and the Pacific island of Guadalcanal for their newest release.

A year after the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, America launched its first invasion of Japanese-occupied territory on the island of Guadalcanal. The invasion was a accounted a success with US forces reclaiming much of the island and its vital airstrip. However, the Japanese counter-attacked, sending in a large seaborne task force to support their remaining troops and oust the Americans. US carrier groups and battleships were in the area and large scale conflict quickly followed. You can take command of either the Japanese or US forces as the Battle For Guadalcanal begins.

Either commander's task is similar, the American's to prevent Japanese from retaking the island, the Japanese commander's to prevent the Americans from holding on it. At the commanders' disposal are aircraft carriers providing air offensive and escort capabilities, battleships and cruisers giving naval support, as well as transport ships carrying vital supplies to the troops on Guadalcanal itself. Hidden movement is catered for with scouts on land and seaplanes over water providing the reconnaissance capability for detailing enemy movements.

The Japanese need to destroy all US battalions to reach the airfield, or destroy most of the US fleet thus forcing the Americans to withdraw. The Americans need only to hold off the enemy long enough. Two Japanese bases are sited on the east and west sides of Guadalcanal, a pincer between which sits the American advantage – the island's airfield from which they can launch air patrols and air attacks.

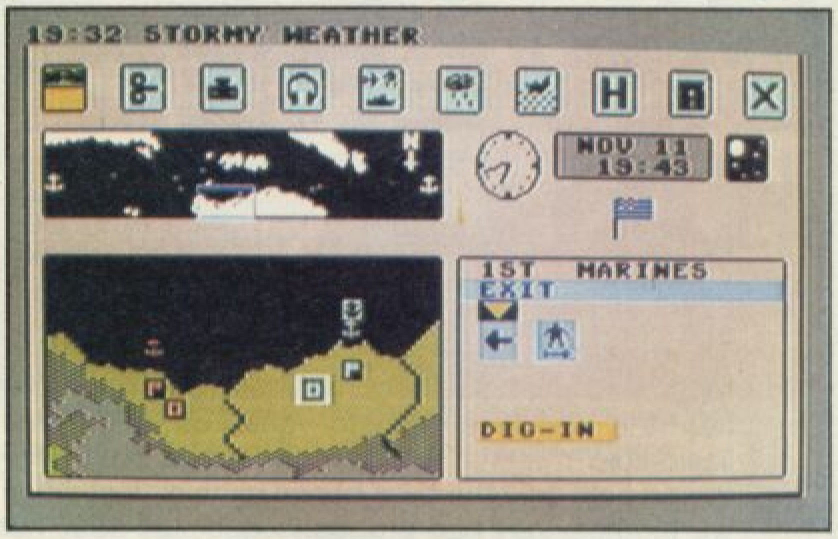
MILITARY IMBALANCE

Commands to units are issued through icons; moving the map cursor over a unit and selecting it brings up the standard icons for movement, combat and extra options available to specific units only (such as the dig-in option for land forces, or the recall-to-base option for aircraft).

Units can be set to follow defined patrol routes automatically while you manipulate other units. Icons along the top control extra features for accelerating game time, using espionage to crack and intercept coded enemy messages, selecting scouts for reconnaisance, as well as bringing up status displays of your current force, weather conditions (neither fleet's aircraft can fly in stormy weather) and any ships sunk. Aircraft fuel levels need monitoring, as running out of fuel forces a plane to ditch. Ammunition is limited, and once used up the plane has to return to base to rearm.

As the game progresses, more and more enemy units land on the island and aircraft attacks increase. Any vessels taking damage can be slowly repaired where they are or repaired instantly at a supply port, any critical hits taken will sink the ship. Direct ship confrontations are quick and bloody, the best tactic being to use aircraft to strafe enemy ships.

The game is won if the enemy suffers major losses and is forced to withdraw from Guadalcanal. Three scenarios are available, giving the player the chance to command either side or try the trainer mode to get used to the game. Games can also be saved to disk or cassette for later play.



Guadalcanal was a particularly ferocious and bloody fight with Americans fighting a Japanese force virtually double their strength. The program realistically captures this immense difference between the opposing forces, giving the Japanese distinct advantage in ship numbers. The ability to define patrol routes for ships and aircraft and then leave them to it is neatly done. Computer intelligence is on a high level of efficiency, using hidden movement to attack under cover of darkness whilst retreating back to port when seriously damaged. But *Guadalcanal* is a somewhat disappointing release, it has the skeleton of a great game but lacks sufficient substance.

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.95

The lack of further scenarios or selectable skill levels does limit the game. The icons themselves work well and prove easy to use, having to confirm movement orders is a pain though. The end-game is drawn out and slows the pace of the game down considerably. On one occasion, the enemy forces on Guadalcanal were wiped out entirely, yet still the opposition refused to withdraw from the island.

OVERALL 63%

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £9.99

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Nothing as of yet, hopefully the Spectrum 128 machines will load in all the missions in one go. Attribute problems won't be in evidence with this type of game and it should prove to be a faithful conversion. The scrolling map might not work too well on the Amstrad but there shouldn't be any problems with the playability and use of icons. Improvements to the general gameplay and unit graphics would be appreciated, but this might not happen if it is a standard conversion from the Spectrum.

> "Guadalcanal **has the skeleton of a great game but lacks sufficient substance."**

VERSION UPDATE

Bard from verse

BARDS TALE VOLUME ONE
Electronic Arts

Atari ST £24.95

THE 8-BIT versions of this were released in the Autumn of 1986, so a short resumé may be in order. Small country town Skara Brae lies under Mangar The Dark's evil grip, his deadly demons stalk the streets of the once-happy community and no outsiders may enter and help the hapless hamlet.

Bards Tale is an RPG with the player taking the role of one of a team of freedom fighters made up of young, inexperienced men whose task is to explore Skara Brae searching for people and objects which may aid their quest.



The team's individual's fighting prowess is initialised at the start of the game when team members can be chosen from an available list or created by the player.

The display is split in three. Top left depicts either the current threat to the party or the location (when moving around the town the movement is very fast and beautifully smooth). Top right displays messages about present predicaments and information concerning individual team members. Below is a list of the team and their current status. Character control uses the move cursor and click mode, and movement options appear in the location window as directional arrows.

COMMENT

The graphics are very attractive, even impressive here and there, with suitably ambient sound effects throughout. On the Atari ST Bards Tale **looks, sounds and even plays better than it ever did on an 8-bit machine.**

ATARI ST OVERALL 65%


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HANG ON SPY HUNTER

ACTION FIGHTER
Sega

Mega Cartridge: £19.95

Sega can, perhaps, be forgiven for using old ideas in *Action Fighter* because at least they are their own old ideas. Pinching the base elements of that ancient Sega coin-op *Spy Hunter*, and using the bike from *Hang On*, they have incorporated the bits into a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up with a difference . . .

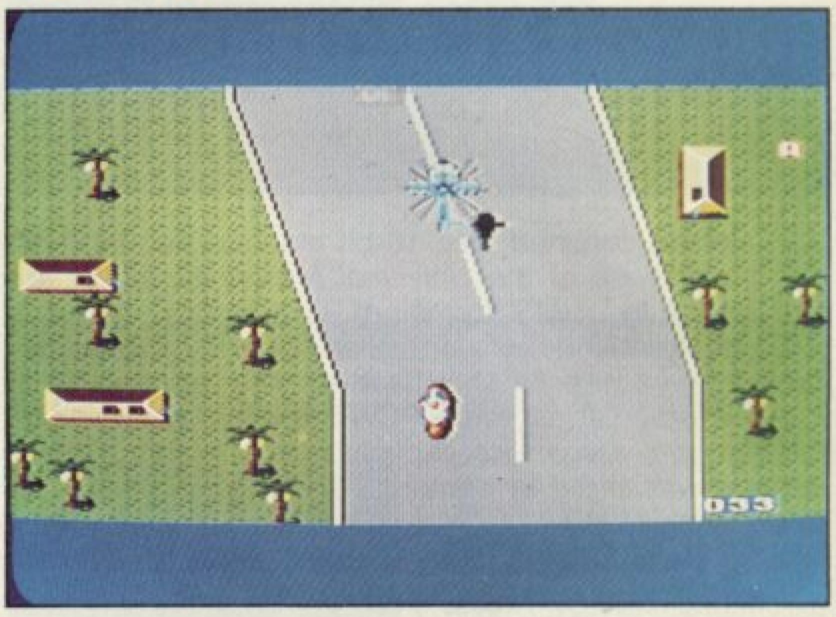
Action Fighter takes place over five stages. Top secret instructions at the beginning of each level detail which targets need to be destroyed – the level one objective is to destroy three nuclear submarines, on two it is six missile tanks, followed by mystery craft on later levels.

Starting off on the *Hang On* bike, you travel along a twisting road avoiding other cars, bikers and ambulances travelling the same route. A helicopter flies over the road, dropping a mine ahead of your vehicle. Signs flash by, indicating bends in the road, and crashing into the kerb or colliding with other vehicles is, naturally enough, fatal.

A timer ticks down from 999, during which time the biker is invincible and this is the best time to amass enough points to get extra lives, because upon reaching zero the player is vulnerable to knocks and collisions, and with only two start lives some careful driving is required.

The vehicle is equipped with twin-cannon, upgradable to air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles simply by entering a Sega weapons truck (à la *Spy Hunter*). As the biker roars along, letters from A to F float down-screen; collect four letters and the bike can transform into a Porsche providing added protection (useful for ramming other road-users). Collect all six letters and the Porsche turns into a flying car (don't ask) and takes to the skies.

Once above the clouds, enemy planes, helicopter gunships, and spaceships missiles swoop in to the attack. The action continues until either you lose all lives or the task on each level is completed.



Once the enemy at the end of each stage is destroyed, it's onto the next level to destroy a different, deadlier set of opponents.

COMMENT

Action is the name of the game as the bike moves along at a fair old speed. The control pad is a pain to use, the slightest movement causing the bike to career off the road – a prime case of a game warranting a Sega joystick. The instructions are translated from the Japanese and they look it. Driving along the road is enjoyable and marginally more fun than the sky sequence, which is a very standard shoot-'em-up. Action Fighter **is not a demanding game, with its fairly basic graphics, limited appeal and simplistic gameplay, but it is enjoyable, reasonably addictive and provides a good few hours distraction.**

OVERALL 63%

ASHURA AND BISHAMON

SECRET COMMAND
Sega

Mega Cartridge: £19.95

The pace of Sega cartridge releases continues with one of the latest, *Secret Command* (at least, that is what it says on the packaging, although the game itself insists on *Secret Commando*, which we feel is the more likely) – an *Ikari Warriors* clone with some oddly named main characters.

The players step into the shoes of Ashura and his buddy Bishamon (from Japan no doubt) with two players playing simultaneously, laying waste to all that stands in their way. Snipers, infantrymen, rocketlauncher- and flamethrower-wielding soldiers, tanks and a host of other heavily armed enemies charge down the screen in an attempt to shift the players from their mortal coil. To get the bad guys out of the way both players are provided with an M-60 machine gun (unlimited ammo of course) and bow-launched arrows with explosive war heads (shades of Rambo).

Barracks either side of the pathway can be blown open to reveal power-up items. Collect these to receive extra arrow-bombs, a stinger bomb (for the player who needs that extra bit of destructive power) or a special secret item which, as the instructions (torturously translated from Japanese) point out, 'will surely increase your power'. Destroy a specified number of enemy infantrymen and extra items appear to improve your range and power of fire.

Not everything is easy to kill. Tanks prove tough customers, requiring several hits before exploding, and the enemy equipped with flamethrowers can prove hot opponents. Reach the end of each level and destroy a barricade to progress to later scenes. At this point, a small force of enemy soldiers (and the odd tank) makes an appearance at this point, so some frantic fire button bashing is needed to survive through to the next level.

A second player can enter the game at any time before round three. After that, any player still in the game is on his own. The warriors fight their way through jungles, forests, deserts, a mountain region, a town, through to the final objective – the enemy fortress protected by most of the opposing army.

COMMENT

Secret Command(o) **is graphically very pleasant; the scenery in each level is attractive, varied and has made great use of colour – why then does the game use pathetic yellow sprites when the enemy gets blown away? The rest of the game is fine, it's playable, enjoyable for shoot-'em-up addicts, and the twin-player option with its partnership aspect is great fun. There's no doubt that the game is addictive, challenging and the difficulty level is about right (although it does seems a bit harsh not allowing another player on after the second round as the later levels aren't exactly a pushover). It won't appeal to everyone's tastes, but if you are looking for a bit of carnage on your Sega, then** Secret Command **is well worth considering.**

OVERALL 74%

MILITARY STIMULATOR

UNIVERSAL MILITARY SIMULATOR

Rainbird

Rainbird continue their 16-bit machine support with the release of the *Universal Military Simulator* (or, mercifully, *UMS* for short) – a quality wargame construction kit of unparalled flexibility and power. When it was given a showcase preview on the British Telecom stand at last year's PCW Show it stirred up much interest from wargamers, especially as its author, **D Ezra Sidran**, was there to demonstrate its capabilities at a bewildering speed.

The *UMS* main menu gives a good idea of how powerful this program is. You are faced with four immediate options:

1. DESIGN MAP; probably the most flexible facility of the program. Using this option battlefields of any conflict from the past, present, or future, from fiction, fantasy or from the depths of the user's imagination can be created. Terrain features such as hills, depressions, ridges, woods and level ground can be added to give the battlefield that authentic touch. The *UMS* disk also contains five maps of historical battles (including Hastings, Waterloo and Gettysburg) which may be loaded and altered. If you tire of designing maps there is a map function which places features randomly on the battlefield for you. Once created, maps can be saved to disk for later use.

2. DESIGN ARMY; once a map is designed, it needs populating by an army. It is possible to amend the ten armies *UMS* provides, or create entirely new armies (anything from a group of dwarves to a squadron of X-Wings) to suit the created battlefield. Everything about a unit, its strength, speed, efficiency, moves per turn and name can be edited. Wildcards provide the basics of a unit (its type and value) and the rest is user-definable. Up to twelve types of wildcard units can be used on the battlefield. Full Save/Load options are available for storing and recalling created armies for inclusion in any defined conflicts.

3. CREATE SCENARIO – the heart of *UMS*. This facility provides limitless possibilities of conflict; you can bring armies from any different time together on any defined battlefield. First step is to place all units of both sides on the map, although anything over a thousand units on screen and the map gets rather crowded. Once all units are placed, all that remains is to define the conflict duration and range of fire of any ranged weapons in the game. It can be saved to disk before being put to the test through Run Simulation.

4. RUN SIMULATION – the wargame itself. Here the chosen armies are pitted against one other on the user defined battleground.

BATTLE PHASES

The whole battlefield can be viewed from any compass direction, while a zoom option allows closer inspection of the action. Extreme zoom presents a close quarters view of any localised fights. If Automatic Zoom is selected, the computer automatically zooms in on any battles occurring.

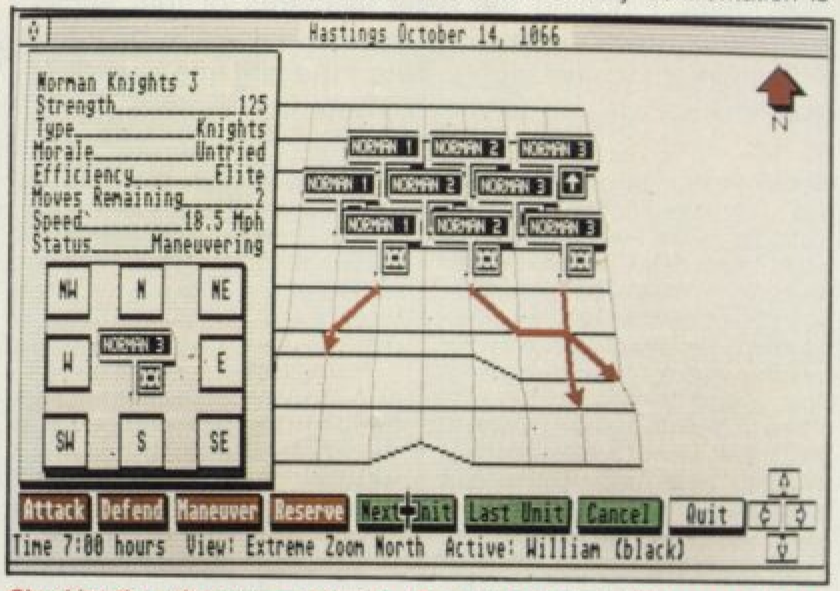
The wargame itself is split into two phases; Command Phase, in which movement commands are issued to units, and Movement/Battle Phase, which is when units execute their commands and enter into combat with opposing forces. All movement is made through the command box, displaying the current unit to be moved, its current status, number of moves remaining and the directions possible. A unit is moved by pointing to the desired compass direction and selecting it, whereupon an arrow marker from the unit indicates the chosen route for the unit to follow in the Movement/Battle Phase. Each unit has to be moved individually as there's no option to move units en masse.

If the computer is the opponent, then the Battle Logic menu can be used to define the computer's tactics in the following Movement Phase. Using this option the computer can be forced to perform attacks, defensive manoeuvres or the computer can be allowed to determine its own strategies. The computer can also be made to move selected units of the player's army whilst other units are user-controlled.

Once all commands have been issued and the computer's Battle Logic determined, the Movement/Battle Phase is entered; all units move to their selected destinations and combat takes place if opposing units come within one square distance of each other. Ranged weapons can fire at any time during this phase. The outcome of any confrontation is determined by comparing each unit's current strength, morale, strength of weapons, efficiency, weaponry accuracy and general unit status, the losing unit being forced to retreat. A marker appears where the battle occurred.

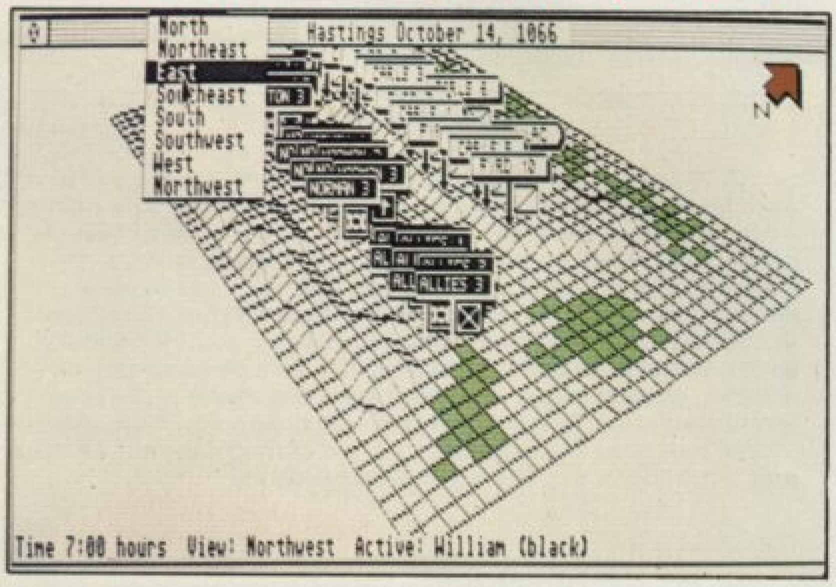
Hidden movement can be induced by toggling the options used to display the black and white army positions, their movement arrows, battle markers and landmarks. The game can also be put into demonstration mode with the computer controlling both sides and all game functions.

All great commanders need a rest at some time, so thoughtfully Save/Load options are provided to suspend battle until another time. Further, both Atari and Epson

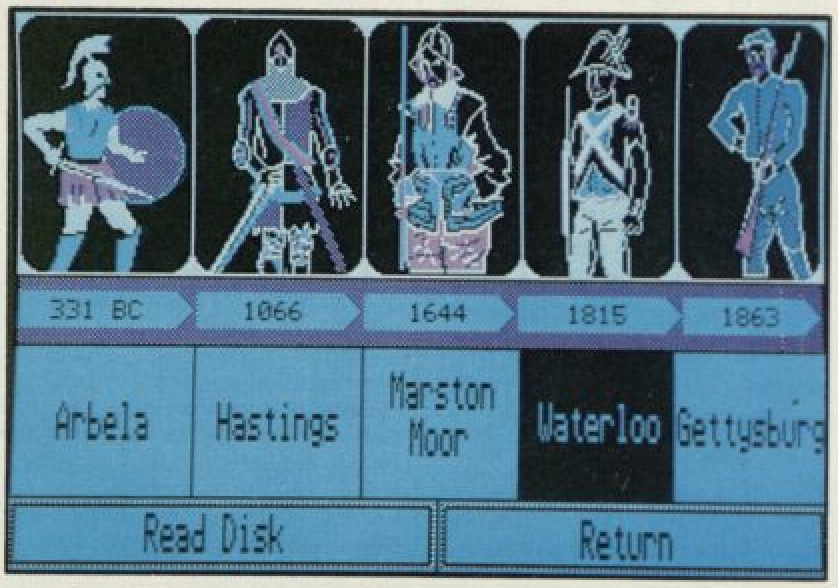


Checking the unit status – arrowed – of a group of untested Norman knights

1066 and all that: Hastings on the morning of October 14 as William and Harold face each other for the battle that changed English history – ST screen



An attractive extra for PC owners is the row of soldier pictures showing the period garb

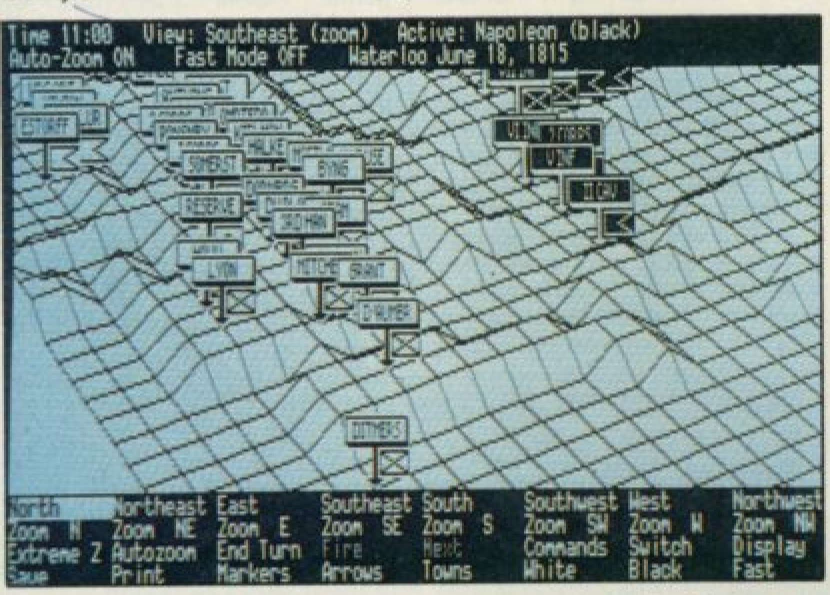


printers are supported by the program so hard copies of battles can be made for posterity. In the near future Rainbird intend releasing further data disks containing new maps and armies of other historical battles.

STIMULATING

Wargames have never had the mass appeal of arcade games and, to a lesser extent, adventure games, but *UMS* should change all that in one fell swoop. *UMS* has the core of a construction kit, the rest of it is open to manipulation and redefinition. The program's open-ended nature means it is limited only by the user's imagination. *UMS* isn't perfect though; a minor omission is the facility to define the effects of firing ranged weapons, and it would have been nice to be able to move multiple units at a time – although much the same thing is done anyway by placing the units under computer control via the Battle Logic menu.

Each part of the program works tremendously well. The map designing facility is simplicity itself (pity though, about the lack of water or rivers for extra realism). Defining units is great fun and it is a tremendous thrill to see everything come together to make impossible conflicts a reality (Napoleon versus a B-52 Squadron, for instance. You can't actually fly in *UMS*, so you can imagine Napoleon's surprise when he saw these giant machines lumbering over the terrain towards his lines . . .).



Unlike the ST version, UMS on the PC has the commands visible at the top and base for cursor selection, rather than through the use of pull down menus

ATARI ST
Diskette: £24.95

UMS **is unique in setting new standards in the field of wargames. Words fail to describe the possibilities and sheer power of the program, and with the backing of further data disks to be released (containing other historical battles) it is set to become a classic program. The** Universal Military Simulator **is simply brilliant – enough said.**

OVERALL 95%

OTHER FORMATS

The PC UMS **(£24.95) will be released just after this issue hits the streets, but was not quite ready in time for review. The only differences to the ST are the period selection graphics (see screenshot) and the on-screen command selection rather than using windows. The Amiga (back to ST-style) is released in March at £24.95, as is the Macintosh version (£34.95). Rainbird say there are no plans for the 8-bit machines, but rumour has it that Matthew Stibbe, who is converting** UMS **for the Apple, would like to tackle a Spectrum version afterwards. Further scenario and battle data disks are intended for periodic release, but no dates or prices at the moment.**

"UMS is a quality wargame construction kit of unparalled flexibility and power."

VERSION UPDATE

Another fine mess . . .

LIVINGSTONE, I PRESUME
Alligata

Atari ST £14.95

DOCTOR LIVINGSTONE has gone missing while performing missionary work deep in the African jungle. The intrepid news reporter Stanley, has determined to enter this deadly jungle and find Livingstone. The 8-bit versions of this game appeared in June 1987 to reasonable acclaim.



Where sea eagles dare

Treasures and secret temples discovered are merely icing on the cake in the search for the great man, a search beset with difficulties. Stanley has to deal with poison darts, pit hammers, spears, man-eating plants, snakes, bats and many more. Using keyboard or keyboard and joystick, he can leap and duck from danger or employ one of four useful items he carries with him. These comprise a pole for vaulting over particularly large problems, a boomerang, a knife for the more straightforward kill and grenades for attacking from above. Food and water, dotted around the seven game levels, maintains Stanley's energy, and there are five gems to collect which enable a safe passage through the secret temple at the end of the seventh level. A map of the first four levels is also included, showing the dangers and secret exits within each.



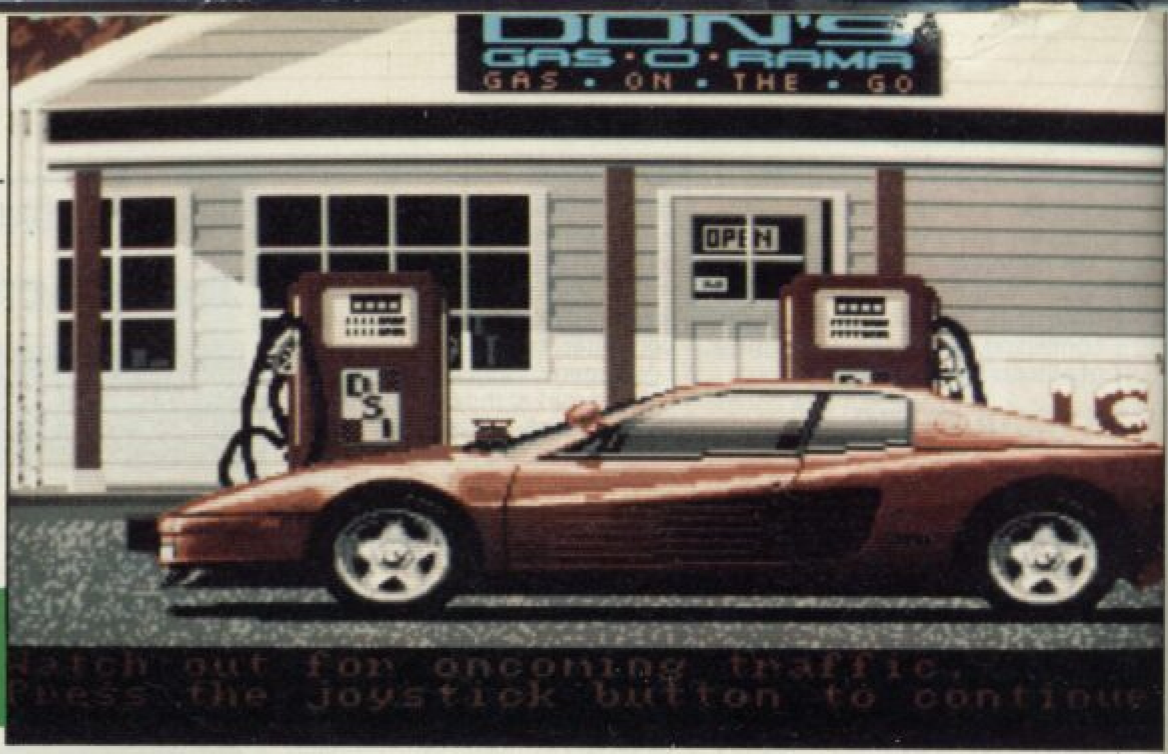
Monkey business deep in the jungle

COMMENT

Livingstone, I Presume **is quite a tough game to complete, requiring pixel-perfect positioning to counter some of the dangers. The packaging even contains infinite lives POKEs for the Spectrum, Amstrad and MSX versions – just to give the player a fighting chance perhaps? But even with the maps, none of this makes the Atari St version any easier to play. Attractive to look at and listen to,** Livingstone **contains lots to do and has just enough toughness to ensure self-anger and lasting interest. A pleasant game which should entertain for some time, and with its price tag of under £15, it should find its way into many software collections.**

ATARI ST
OVERALL 69%

PEDAL TO THE METAL



Test Drive is the ultimate wish-fulfilment simulation – Amiga screen

TEST DRIVE
Accolade/Electronic Arts

From a team of some ten programmers, comes everyone's dream of test driving the fastest cars in the world. There's a steep climb ahead, vertical rockface to the right and a sheer drop on the left. The traffic's slow, the cops mean – and don't forget, drive on the right, you're in America . . .

Five gleaming dream-machines await your purchase: a Ferrari Testarossa, a Lotus Turbo Esprit, a Porsche 911 Turbo, a Chevrolet Corvette and the ultimate four-wheeled monster – the Lamborghini Countach. All the specifications are at your behest with a short disk access for each, and once a vehicle has been chosen, it takes a few seconds to load The Rock.

The Rock is one of those torturously twisting roads winding precariously up a mountainside so beloved of cheap American TV series, and a test drive on it is perfect for putting the car – and the player – through their paces. The view is from inside the saloon, showing road ahead, complete with hills, dips and hairpin bends, but you have to keep an eye on the rear-view mirror as well. Direction and speed-limit signs flash past and there is plenty of traffic on the road with you. Other cars and lorries move quite slowly so overtaking is essential – if risky, what with traffic coming in the opposite direction as well.

Joystick control is simple: forwards and backwards to accelerate and brake, steer left and right, change gears up with the joystick forwards and press fire, backwards to change down. When you press fire, a window appears showing the gearshift, so you can see what gear you are in.

THE JOY OF FELONY

The police are not too pleased to see speed limits ignored by fancy cars burning up the road, so they have set up radar speed traps along the route. To counter these, a radar detector installed in the car provides vital warning of any police traps ahead. When all three of the detector's LEDs are lit the police are coming up behind. The choice is yours: either slow down to a law-abiding speed or try and outrun the smokies and run the risk of being caught.

Stopping at a gas station along the way provides fuel and records the car's average speed. Points are allocated based on the car's performance so far. Ego-boosting comments like 'Pass any low flying planes back there?' reward the fast drivers whilst snails must content themselves with: 'You drive like my grandmother'.

Colliding with other vehicles, running off the road or simply over-revving the engine costs a life. And with only five to play around with, some careful driving is needed. Although the controls have been greatly simplified, the specific performance factors of each car have to be mastered and the gears used skillfully if the car is to stand any chance of reaching the top of The Rock in one piece and your smugness remain intact.

In fact the front-end with its quality speech and graphically excellent car specification diagrams hides a relatively simplistic first-person car racing game. Rather than opt for lastability in providing several courses, Accolade have gone the different car route, and so while the single mountain road is interesting and enjoyable at first, it soon becomes repetitive simply due to the lack of variation in the gameplay. Nevertheless, in the shorter term *Test Drive* is addictive and there's a great deal of fun to be had in racing expensive, world-beating cars around twisting roads.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95
The 64 version is imminent and judging by the demo we have seen, it plays very similarly to the 16-bit versions with a good match on the graphics. Test Drive **access the disk a lot, so cassette owners will probably find themselves with long waits for the multi-loads. No other 8-bit versions are planned.**

Other road users are enough to drive you round the bend



ATARI ST
Diskette: £24.95
No sightings of the ST version as of yet, but previous conversions of Accolade titles (such as Hard Ball**) have mostly been successful. Graphical depreciation may occur in the car selection screens and the sound may be simpler, but there shouldn't be any problems with the game itself. Inclusion of extra tracks on disk or more things for the player to do would improve the game immensely, but as it is a conversion this doesn't seem likely. ST** Test Drive **is in the capable hands of Accolade themselves so the results should be worth waiting for.**

AMIGA
Diskette: £24.95
Oncoming traffic, though fast, moves in animated jumps, which isn't exactly realistic. However, in simulation terms the behaviour of your car is about as realistic as it could be without having the steering wheel in your hands. The colours used are sparse, considering what the Amiga is capable of, and they don't improve much as the game progresses. The sound FX of engine notes in different gears and squealing tyres as you take sharp bends and dips in the road add excitement and give a reasonable impression of high-speed driving. But lastability is a fragile commodity with there not being enough to do in the game.

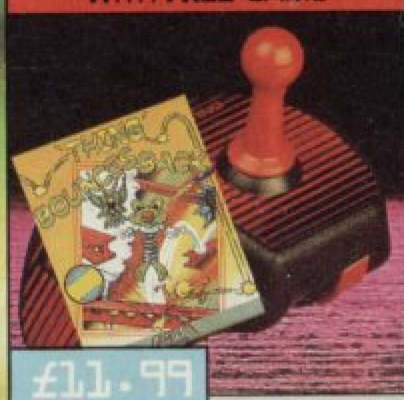
OVERALL 69%

> "Test Drive **is perfect for putting the car – and the player – through their paces."**

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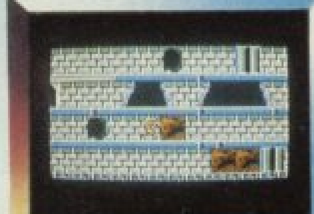
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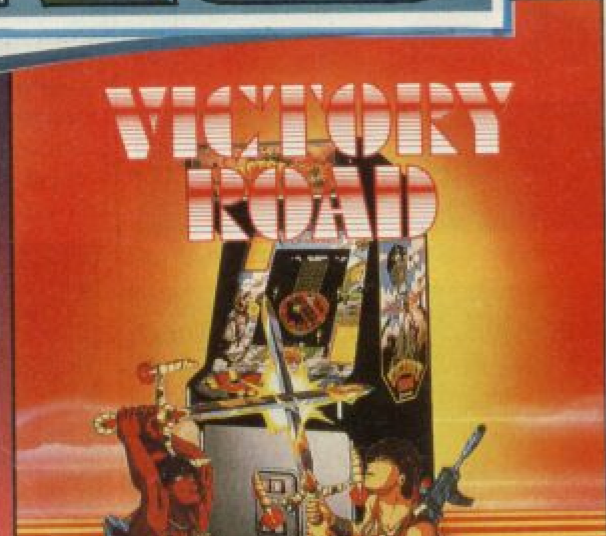
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DISK



More arcade magic from the SNK label. Psycho soldier is tipped for the top as her thirst for action and adventure takes her to even more strange worlds.









Having survived the bloodsucking monsters of the first phase, you progress on to the actual Road itself.

This is where the fun really begins. You will meet vampires, two and three headed monsters – the head will fly at you on its own, just when you think you are gaining the upper hand.

Collect icons to build up the firepower necessary to fight off your aggressors.

Action and excitement all the way with this macabre and unusual game; which has that elusive extra something to keep you coming back for more.

...the name of the game

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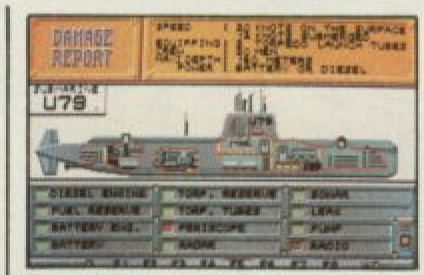
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SUB STANDARD

BLUE WAR
GO!

Since its recent inception GO! hasn't fared too well – the Commodore *Captain America* and multi-format *Trantor* both suffered, despite the latter's excellent graphics. *Blue War* is a World War II submarine simulation and the first GO! release on the ST – it is also for the Amstrad CPC – from the oddly named **Game Blot**, a French software house. The player takes command of an Allied submarine patrolling the Pacific, hunting and destroying Japanese shipping.

Starting out from the main Allied base, the submarine receives its I-D code (without which it cannot reenter port) and manoeuvres out to sea to begin its patrol. A row of icons are used to control the sub's movement and combat functions. The Map icon is used to calculate a heading towards enemy vessels, the Sonar icon comes into operation for accurate close-range navigation, and the radio icon displays any messages from base as well as reconnaissance plane reports. Movement drains the sub's batteries, so recharging and oxygen replenishment on the surface has to be performed from time to time, making the vessel vulnerable to attack.



Counting the cost of submarinal battle

Attacking Japanese cruisers, destroyers and aircraft carriers simply involves lining up the target and firing a torpedo. The enemy does not sit by idly while this happens, however, and they fire their guns if the sub moves within range. Damage from enemy fire is shown on the engine room display (via the Engine icon) as a red square highlighting the submarine's affected area.

Repairs can only be made by either returning to port or by making a rendezvous with a supply ship, when refuelling and rearming can also take place. Consulting the Records icon brings up detailed information on all the ships in the game, along with a diagram of each. Hazards other than direct enemy engagement include running aground and vessel collisions.

As the submarine destroys more and more enemy shipping, the player's naval rank increases – although sinking Allied shipping brings about a swift demotion by several ranks. Referencing the Log icon shows your current rank, with the log recording the number and type of ships destroyed.

If all enemy ships are sunk, head back to port and enter the correct submarine I-D code to complete the mission.

OTHER FORMATS

GO! have no plans for converting Blue War **to any other machines.**

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.99

Don't be fooled by the impressive graphics, the game contains little to maintain interest for long. The ships do look good, but the torpedo sequence itself is graphically horrendous. Realism seems to have been left in port too, since when can you see other submarines under water? The game is too simplistic to be classed as a simulation, and contains none of the tense atmosphere normally associated with submarine warfare.

OVERALL 43%

FROM THE ASHES . . .

PHOENIX
Infogrames

ATARI ST ONLY

The two authors of *Phoenix* are ST mad. **Paul Cuisset** was born in Saigon, is very well travelled and, when not working as an analyst-programmer, spends every waking moment on computer games. His partner, **Patrick Guillemet**, was born at Coulommiers and is apparently a PEEK' n' POKE maestro. He, too, is an analyst-programmer but splits time between twanging his guitar and programming games for the Atari ST. They joined forces to write *Phoenix* for **Ere Informatique** in France and **Infogrames** grabbed and shipped it to dear old Blighty for our delight and delectation.

Don't be fooled by the title, as the screen shot shows, this is an entirely different game to the old arcade favourite that also bears its name. However, like its namesake, *Phoenix* is quite a simple idea, but it is fast, unusual and very addictive.

Sitting at the controls of a Phoenix AY 21 it feels as though nothing could harm the pilot, yet the task before him could well prove to be beyond the capabilities of even this amazing craft.

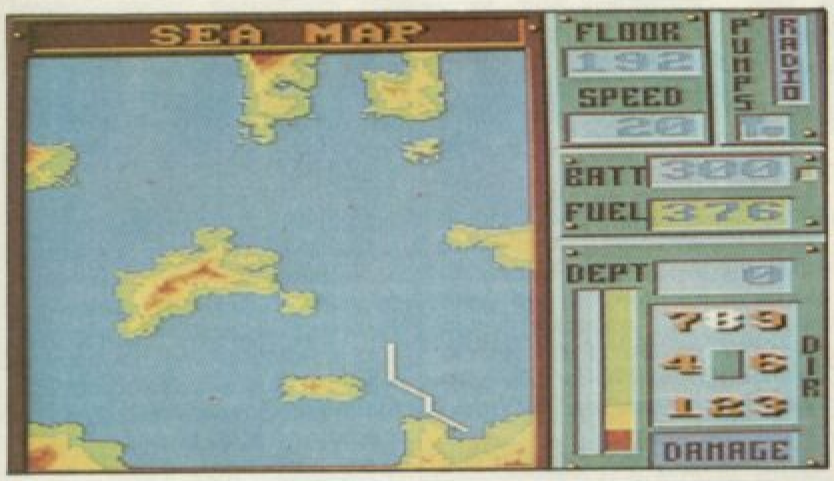
As space travel improved so the extensive need for hyperspace routes waned. The pathways fell into disuse and were left alone until now when a new need for them has arisen and the authorities want them reopened. But in their dereliction they have become unsafe, booby traps and laser stations infest the routes and black holes are a commonplace. And that's your job, in the Phoenix, to clear them up.

PRETTY REDUNDANT

The screen displays the hi-tech and very pretty, but nonetheless largely redundant, Phoenix control panel which acts as a border to the action viewscreen. In fact the only relevant information contained in the border is the player's current level. In the viewscreen the hyperspace routes are seen, represented as vector graphic wire-frame lines of near

Cosmic Causeway in a 3D tunnel? Phoenix on the Atari ST





Disappointing seafaring warfare with GO!'s **Blue War**

AMSTRAD CPC

Diskette only: £14.95

Blue War **on the Amstrad is identical to the ST version (apart from the ship graphics which are much simpler line drawings), keeping the extremely simple submarine controls, the lack of game variety, almost non-existent sound and the needless constant disk access. Thankfully, the tedious end message of the ST game has been taken out. As a simulation, it is barely average and as an arcade game it fares little better. The sluggish responses and BASIC-style graphics make this very poor value for money.**

OVERALL 33%

"As a simulation, it is barely average and as an arcade game it fares little better."

continuous blue tiles having varying properties, and the basic game objective is to steer a course that ensures non-destructive tiles are below the Phoenix at all times.

To the right the player's energy level, which steadily decreases whilst travelling, is shown. Most of the game's features stem from reactions caused by the different-coloured tiles, affecting the Phoenix in varying ways when touched. Red increases the craft's power, light blue drains it, green sends the Phoenix temporarily out of control and purple destroys it.

Laser stations (green cubes) fire at the Phoenix – it can be returned but only at the expense of the power level – black holes, depicted as two rotating yellow triangles, are instant death if entered, but they too can be shot. To get through the increasingly difficult levels, *Phoenix* demands fast reactions (with either joystick or keyboard) to turn the ship, fire at the laser stations and black holes and steer clear of the less friendly tiles.

Because of the game's speed, it is useful that pressing the R key after an untimely demise, instigates an action replay mode to show you where you went wrong.

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.95

Phoenix **really is a simple game, but implemented very well (although the sound is rather basic). It is therefore easy to get going, but its speed and the increasingly hard levels makes it very addictive.** Phoenix **is only planned for release on the Atari ST but it works so well on this machine that perhaps conversions for different formats would be a mistake.**

OVERALL 71%

"Phoenix **is quite a simple idea, but it is fast, unusual and very addictive."**

ENEMY AHEAD

BACKLASH

Novagen

ATARI ST ONLY

Backlash is by **Paul Woakes** of *Mercenary* fame and is proclaimed, by some, as the ST version of his old Commodore 64 game *Encounter*. It says at the top of this review: 'Atari ST only', and that is certainly Novagen's plan for the game at the moment . . . but they said that about *Mercenary*.

Backlash is a high-speed shoot-everything-in-sight game sometimes reminiscent of the old *Battlezone*. Here, you control planet-skimming craft, armed to the teeth with a never-ending supply of ammunition, and face waves of aggressors (or is the player the aggressor?) each more deadly than the last. They hurtle at you in varying forms such as flying saucers walking droids and spinning tops, but whatever their shape, your task is to annihilate each and every one before they return the favour.

The screen shows a pilot's-eye-view of the terrain, its obstacles and inhabitants, with a circular head-up display for sights and radar. Control of the craft is by joystick with eight-directional movement available, forward, reverse right, rotate left and so on, with the fire button activating missiles. A quit option is provided for wimps and a pause key for pinky recharging. *Backlash* gives the player five lives to start with and awards an extra life for every 10,000 points scored.

Backlash – much like THE GAMES MACHINE's reviewers – is fast, mindless and noisy. The persistence of the alien attack certainly separates the men from the boys when it comes to joystick dexterity.

ATARI ST

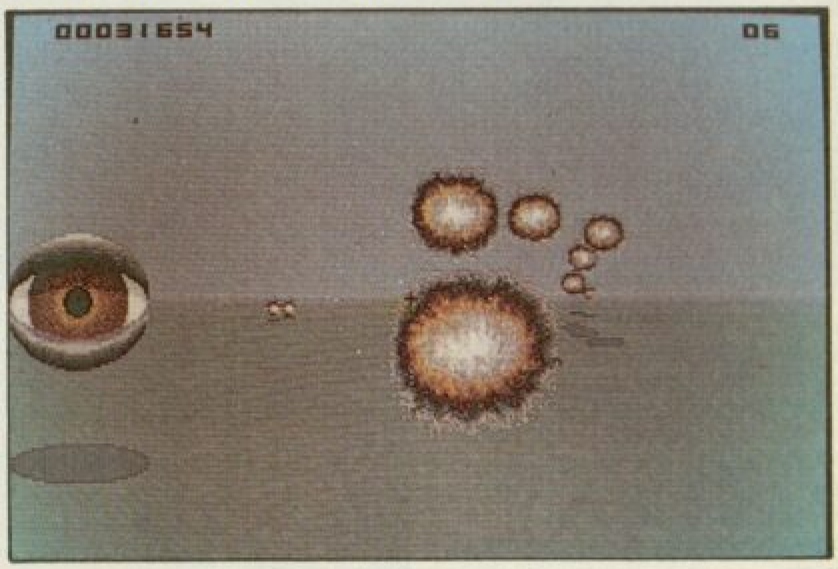
Diskette: £19.95

There are some drawbacks: the music is completely out of context with the game, tedium arises after playing for any length of time and the radar display is placed dead centre in the screen which is where all the action takes place. There are times when you may not be able to determine where alien ships are due to all the flack flying round the screen. Having said that, Backlash **is very fast, well implemented and with plenty to aim at, so it should do well for those likable mercenaries at Novagen.**

OVERALL 67%

"Backlash **– fast, mindless and noisy – certainly separates the men from the boys . . . "**

Seeing eye to eye with a barrage of flak – ST screen



FLYING BOAT

PHM PEGASUS

Lucasfilm/Electronic Arts

Lucasfilm Games, offshoot of the George (*Star Wars*) Lucas company and creators of such programs as *Rescue On Fractalus*, *Ballblazer* and *Koronis Rift* change tack with their newest release and take to the seas with what is a mixture of simulation and arcade action. Previous UK marketing of Lucasfilm games has been through Activision, *PHM Pegasus* is the first to go through Electronic Arts.

More of an aircraft than a ship, the Patrol Hydrofoil Missile (PHM) Pegasus sails across the water on raised skis, the ship's hull hovering free of surface resistance. Armed to the teeth with anti-ship missiles, a deck gun and anti-missile chaff, you take PHM Pegasus through eight progressively difficult missions ranging from seek-and-destroy to escorting convoys and the simple all-out combat mission against incoming patrol boats.

Pegasus can accelerate up to 50 knots on its foils, using its 40-mile radius radar to locate ships. Binoculars give a view of any vessels in the surrounding area (both friend and foe), and accurate vessel identification is needed to prevent firing at your own side.

The first two missions (Battle Training and Graduation Exercise) pit Pegasus against similarly armed patrol boats. All enemy boats have to be destroyed within a time limit or they will destroy you. Two seek-and-destroy missions – Terrorist Attack and Search for Terrorists – involve chasing terrorists across the Mediterranean and eliminating them before they reach safety in a distant base. Two helicopters give extra radar coverage to detect the high-speed attack craft.

In 'A Better Part Of Valour', Pegasus's presence is required in South American waters, which means taking the ship from the Key West naval port through to the map's southern edge. Time is severely limited, so try avoiding time-consuming combat engagements. A SeaSprite helicopter is made available for locating incoming enemy missile boats.

In the surveillance mission, Pegasus is chosen to photograph eight suspected arms-carrying tankers. Approach to within 1500 feet of the ships to photograph them. Matters are complicated through your not being allowed to fire upon the tankers, and great care must be exercised when patrolling missile boats attack. Two SeaHawk helicopters give assistance in locating the slow-moving tankers.

Surprisingly, *PHM Pegasus* has a lot of atmosphere, mainly due to the realism of the missions, and especially the last two, Supply Convoy and Jihad. Of all the missions, these are the most dangerous. In the first Pegasus is given the task of protecting a convoy as it makes its way through a Caribbean warzone towards a safe port. Jihad is the most topical scenario, set in the dangerous Persian Gulf, protecting a supply ship winding its way through the war-torn Gulf waters and out into the Indian Ocean. While guarding the convoy at all times, you must keep retaliatory action to a minimum. Two helicopters are provided to scan for potential threats.

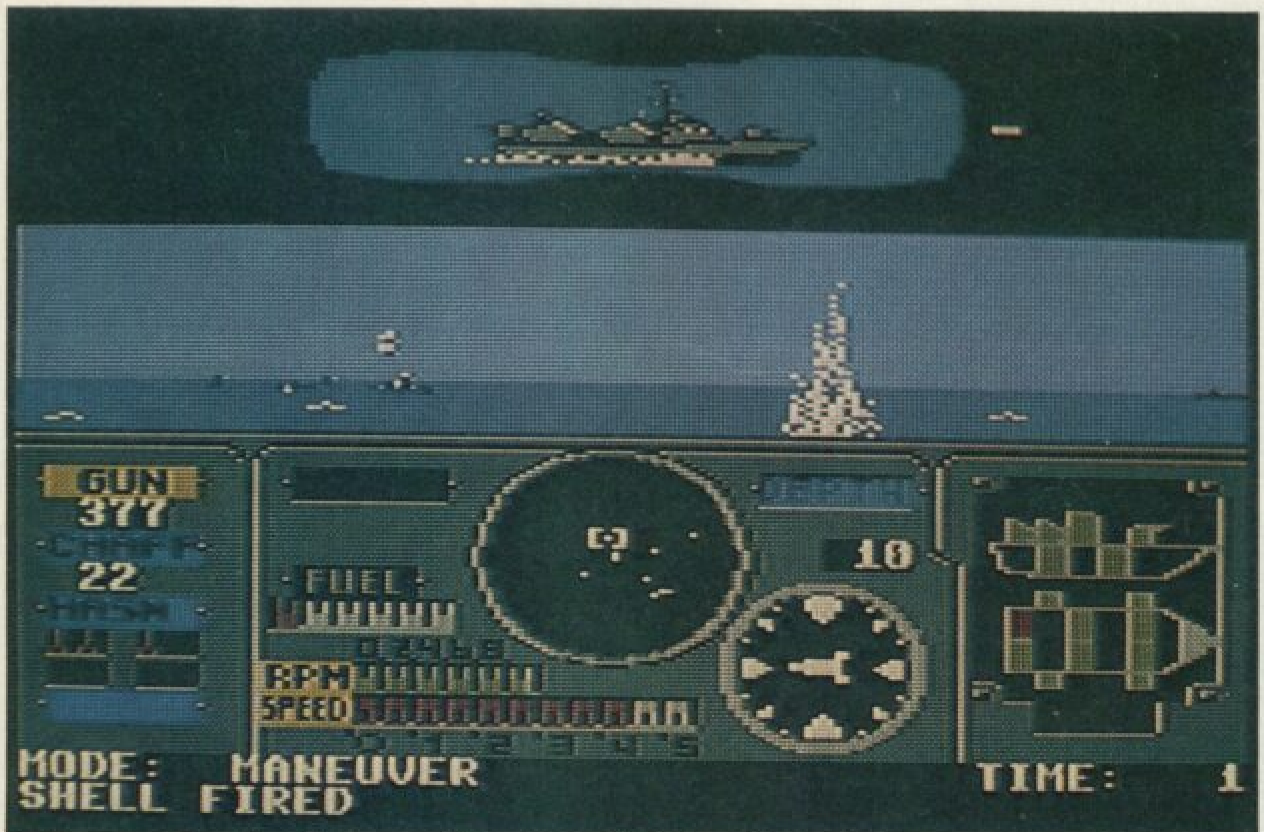
In the past mixing simulation and arcade action has not always worked, but in *PHM Pegasus* the combination has paid off.

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

As is to be expected with a game from Lucasfilm, PHM Pegasus **is a polished product. The graphics are nicely detailed, sound is effectively used and the general presentation is up to the mark, including some comprehensive game instructions. Quite why the view out of the ship is so narrow isn't explained, but whatever the reason it looks awkward. The complex algorithms used in manipulating the ship sprites work particularly well, the patrol boats maintaining their shape and appearance as they draw near with virtually no jumps in animation. Action and gameplay may seem limited but the game is fun and the eight missions, though relatively easy (and a real bind on cassette), provide a worthy challenge.**

OVERALL 76%



The binoculars above show the enemy craft targetted, while in the real view, a shell explodes dangerously close to Pegasus

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £8.95

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

Unavailable for review, both versions should be released before this issue hits the streets. Cassette multi-loads (for the different scenarios) may be a drawback, but allowing for a monochromatic viewscreen on the Spectrum version, hardly a detraction in this sort of game, both are expected to play very similarly to the Commodore version. Watch out for version updates.

OTHER FORMATS

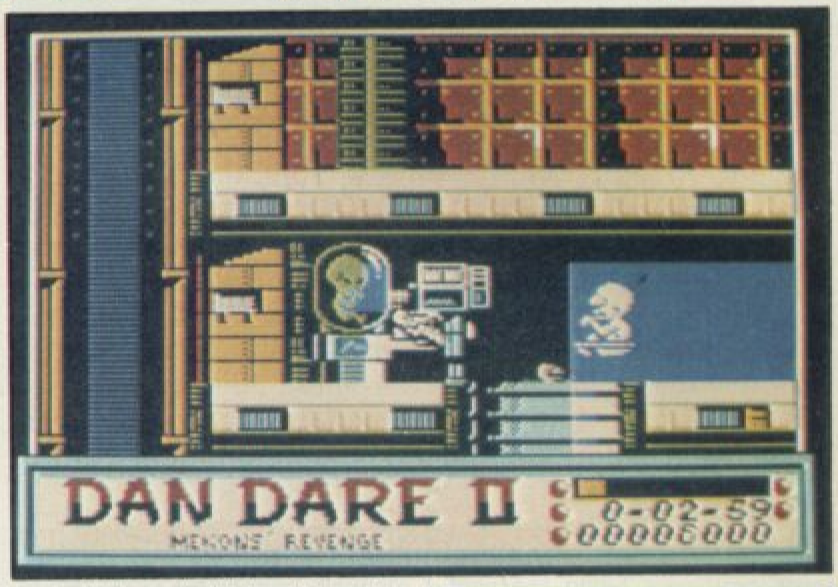
There are no plans for any 16-bit conversions.

"PHM Pegasus **has a lot of atmosphere due to the realism of the missions . . .**"

MEEK 'N' WILD

DAN DARE II
Virgin Games

The cleverest move Virgin ever made with the 1986 *Dane Dare* (apart from securing the licence in the first place to one of Britain's greatest hero characters), was to provide each of the popular 8-bit machines with its own discreet game, thus avoiding invidious comparison and ensuring that each was a success in its own right. Now, two years later, Dan's back in a second adventure against his bitterest enemy, the Mekon, from Virgin's in-house programming Treen-team, **The Gang Of Five**.



Once again the evil Mekon, aided by his Venusian Treens, has turned his baleful attention towards Earth and its Spacefleet forces. The attack is under way. Inside the Mekon's new and sophisticated battleship the 'little green horror' has mucked around with genetics to create a race of Supertreens.

Supertreens, housed in plexiglass life support bubbles in embryonic form, are scattered around the battleship's four levels. The Mekon's plan is eject the bubbles from each level in turn – at which point the level self-destructs, providing the game with time limits – and scatter them into Earth's atmosphere, where presumably – the scenario does not make this clear – they will eventually land, grow into full-sized Supertreens and take over the planet.

Playing Dan Dare – spacepilot of the future, your objective is to explore the ship and destroy Supertreens when you find them. The countdown begins as soon as the first Supertreen control box is destroyed. Advancing a level can only be achieved when all Supertreens from the current level have been destroyed.

But if you prefer to be evil for the day, there is a second option to play the Mekon. The object is similar, with the important exception that you are releasing the Supertreen life bubbles to continue their evil mission, but the game is harder because Dare's incursion has triggered the destruct sequence, leaving with with much less time to complete each level and escape to safety.

Both characters are provided with the ubiquitous Mekontan jetcar which is tricky to control due to its high inertia. The Mekon has his supporting Treens for protection and offense, but Dan is not alone, a force of Spacefleet pilots has boarded the battleship with him. The laser crossfire, however, can be become dangerously furious.

The continual effect of gravity, combined with the jetcar's inertia means that controlling it is tricky at first, and getting into tight spots can be frustrating. On the other hand, this in itself lends the game a first level of play, just mastering the machine and exploring the multi-layered decks of the ship's levels. It is probably best to get to grips with the ship's layout before attempting to kill or rescue Supertreens because the time limit is tightly calculated.

Dan Dare II could have stood alone without the licence, but the Dan Dare characters help to provide an extra sense of depth to this fun blasting game. It should already be clear that Virgin have not followed their earlier scheme, and the Spectrum and Amstrad games, at least (the Commodore version is 'behind schedule'), are identical in play except for the start screen positioning.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £12.95

The schedule having slipped, we will have to wait to see Dan Dare II **on the Commodore, but Virgin say the gameplay elements will be identical to the other 8-bit versions.**

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £9.95

Dan Dare II **makes a pleasing sequel, with plenty of appeal but somewhat less depth than the first one. The Spectrum version is a touch more playable than the Amstrad, mainly because the graphics (by Martin Wheeler who gave Virgin their first big hit with** Sorcery**) are a lot clearer, though not as immediately stunning. Colour has been well and liberally used without attribute problems and the sound FX are above average, even in 48K mode. A neat piece of programming with enough entertainment to make it a worthy purchase.**

OVERALL 76%

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette only: £9.95

The impressive graphics have one small drawback – the scenery tends to look very similar from deck to deck and room to room, making exits hard to find; otherwise the characters are detailed and well animated. The general sound FX are not significantly better than those on the Spectrum version, but the explosions are nice and thumpy. A good seek and destroy shoot-'em-up.

OVERALL 74%

Two Supertreen embryos (already dead) sit on their platforms either side of Dan in the very colourful Spectrum version



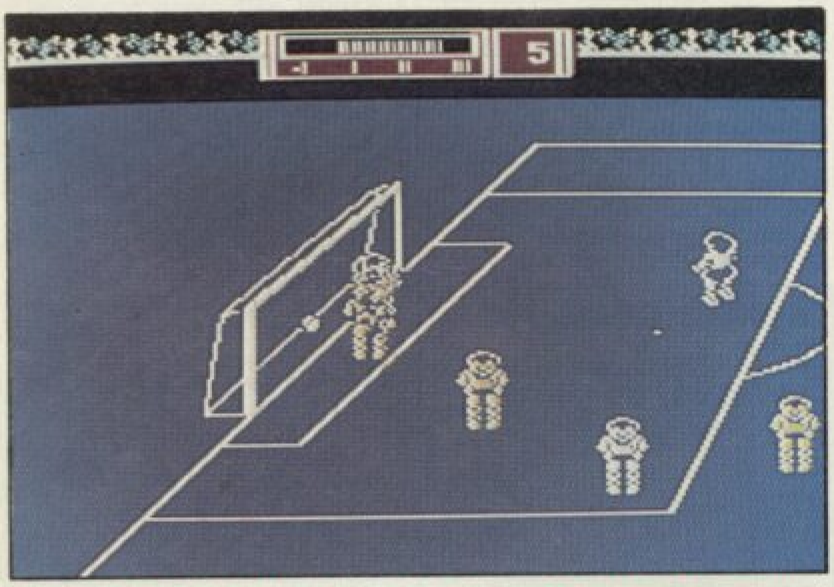
" . . . the Dan Dare characters help to provide an extra sense of depth to this fun blasting game."

NEVER WALK ALONE

MATCH DAY II
Ocean

Early in 1985 **Jon Ritman** and **Colin Clarke** coded a football game called *Match Day* and, as these things happen, it went on to become as big a hit on the Spectrum as *International Soccer* had been on the 64. Later on graphical designer **Bernie Drummond** teamed up with Ritman to bring us the computerised caped crusader *Batman* and the wacky *Head Over Heels*. Now, due to popular demand, and having worked night and day, they bring us the new, improved *Match Day II*.

The sequel features a considerable number of changes, most prominent being the vast number of kicks and kicking styles available; the Kickometer allows you to perform backheels, soft-, medium- and hard-power kicks, volley shots or set to one type of shot power for the entire game.



A blue pitch may look odd, but it shows up the players better than the green – Spectrum screen

Extra realism is provided through inclusion of the Diamond Deflection System, whereby the ball deflects off a player at a variety of angles dependent on the player's speed, direction of movement and the ball's approach angle.

A comprehensive front-end allows you to select a human or computer goalkeeper, different skill levels, the degree of game sound, length of play in real time (5, 10 or 15 minutes per half) and team tactics (offensive or defensive). Taking corners, goal kicks and heading the ball are all in the game, whilst unsporting teams can even resort to barging the opposition.



The Amstrad action

RECOGNITION

League and Cup matches present challenges for either one player against the computer, two players head-to-head or two players together on the same side versus the computer. When a match is going badly, it's possible to manually change the score (cheat in other words).

The difficulty in recognising which on-field player you were controlling in the original *Match Day* (the footballer's socks changed colour) has been sensibly rectified by identifying him with a small version of the Kickometer above his head. Even more helpfully, this keeps time with the actual Kickometer at the top of the screen, making it much easier to control the power of the kick.

If you feel the urge to see your favourite team win the League, then all the team names and team colours (and even the pitch colour) can be changed to whatever takes your fancy.

It looks as though Ritman and Drummond have come up with yet another classic computer game. In general there is little to choose between the three versions in structure or gameplay. The two-player and twin-player options provide immense fun and make for highly addictive play, and the incredible number of options and redefinable features will keep armchair footballers happy for ages.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

Match Day **was good – the sequel is even better. Playability and all-round game feel has been considerably improved. Although the speed of the game isn't exactly fast (the Amstrad is the slowest version), the action is furious and the computer team gets very tricky indeed on higher levels. To prevent further loss of game speed the graphics are semi-transparent which produces a few odd effects at times but it works. Miss this one and you will be sick as a parrot!**

OVERALL 87%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95

Since the original *Match Day* **numerous football simulations have failed to better it – until now. This must be the definitive Spectrum action football game. The graphics are functional rather than superlative, though better defined than the original's. What makes** *Match Day II* **such a great game is that it is instantly playable, and the twin-player option adds an extra dimension with team cooperation absolutely necessary.** *Match Day II* **is a must.**

OVERALL 91%

OTHER FORMATS

In keeping with their 'Joyce' versions of *Batman* **and** *Head Over Heels*, **Ritman and Drummond are doing an Amstrad PCW version, but while visiting THE GAMES MACHINE, Jon added that he would like to code** *Match Day II* **for the PC compatibles as well – fingers crossed.**

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

The wealth of moves and tactics available put this game in a league of its own. The graphics are clear and realistically animated, it's quite a joy to see the players running around dribbling, heading the ball and barging each other. Occasionally, a pair of feet might appear in mid-air, and some of the colours selected make the score line invisible, but these are minor quibbles. The computer team is virtually perfect, the speed of the game means you're kept on your toes for the full 90 minutes. The great music plays along merrily and adds to the game's addictiveness and high level of playability. Compared with *International Soccer*, *Match Day II* **is in a league of its own.**

OVERALL 90%

"Ritman and Drummond have come up with yet another classic computer game."

IT JUST WON'T WASH

BONE CRUNCHER
Superior Software

Apart from some ancient excursions onto the Commodore 64 and the within-living-memory *Repton*, **Superior** are best known to BBC owners, including the elite few who own the newest model, the Archimedes, for which they did *Zarch*. *Bone Cruncher*, therefore, represents the company's most significant release for the Commodore 64/128 – it's out for the Amiga as well, and of course the BBC.

It would be easy to accuse *Bone Cruncher*'s scenario of stinking, but only because it's all about filthy dirty dragons and one particular yuppie dragon called Bono, who makes soap from skeleton bones to gives to his less clean neighbours. So much for the storyline, in this game, strongly reminiscent of *Boulderdash*, it is the geography which is important.

Bono resides in a castle surrounded by the sea, and it is in the sea that the much larger and much dirtier dragons live. The maze of castle halls and corridors are packed with earth through which Bono 'digs' to reach the skeletons. To make a bar of soap he needs to collect five bone-piles and then go to the nearest cauldron to boil them down into soap. The resulting bar can then be taken to adjacent steps leading up to the sea's edge and given to a dragon neighbour for its toilette.

So far, so good, but there are problems. Hollow squares of earth within the castle contain Glooks, Monsters, Spiders and trap doors, and all except the first can kill Bono with a touch. Wits are Bono's only weapon, although he does have a friend called Fozzy who accompanies him through the daily tasks and who helps with some dangers – he can grab green monsters, for instance, and hold them while Bono goes about his business in relative safety. Unfortunately Fozzy is a bit of a doom brain and gets lost or trapped without constant guidance from Bono.

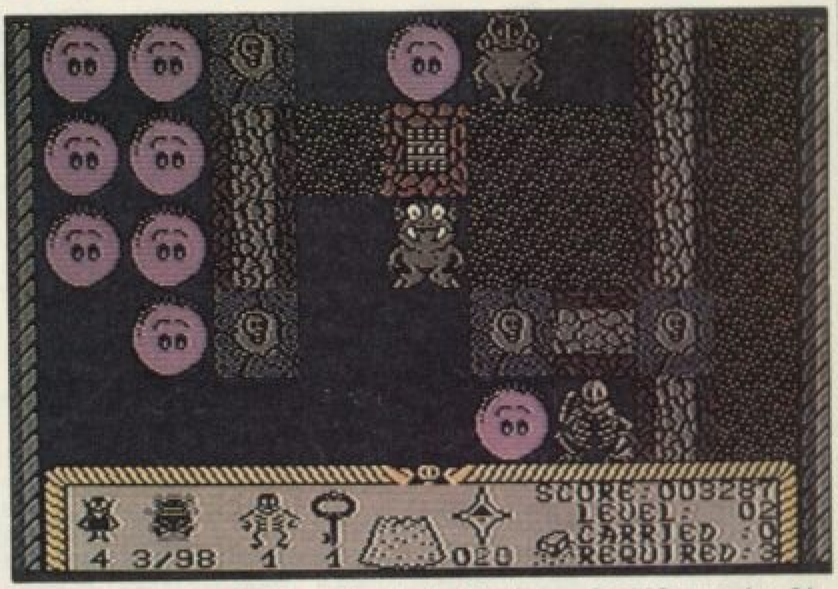
The Glooks – often in groups – act as mobile maze elements, mostly by sitting in Bono's way (though they can be pushed around if the path is clear), but they have a soft spot for the aroma of soap. This means that whenever Bono has successfully delivered a bar of soap to a sea dragon, a while after his return (watch the timed countdown on the status panel) all Glooks in the vicinity move as far as they can in the direction of the aroma. This soap propensity can be used to Bono's advantage, but it can as well be a hindrance, blocking off doors he may later need to use.

Each game level contains one area of dirt which explodes into a volcanic eruption of Glooks if it is dug into, spelling disaster for soap manufacture. Keys, dotted around the castle, are used to to unlock doors barring Bono's way allowing access to further areas of the castle maze. Once a level has been successfully completed you are presented with a password for the next. New games may be started from any level for which a password has been gained.

A status panel – rather bland in design – shows lives remaining for Bono and Fozzy, numbers of keys, skeletons and soaps carried, last aroma direction, soaps required to complete a level and a Fozzy indicator which shows whether he is dead, active, trapped or holding a monster (useful as Fozzy is not always visible).

The action is depicted with larger than life, nicely detailed and animated creatures. Successful deliverance of a bar of soap to a dirty sea dragon rewards you with a full-screen, animated sequence of the creature enjoying a jolly good scrub.

Bone Cruncher is an old-style game and its general aim is a little tired by today's standards. However, it is cleverly designed, presents sufficient challenge for worthy gameplay and the creatures' representation adds considerable charm – the annoyed look on a Glook's face as Bono touches it, is a particularly nice touch. *Bone Cruncher* begins easily enough to ensure some perseverance from the player. A nice game but nothing to get lathered up about.



Fozzy and Bono about to be grabbed by the Glooks . . . Ouch! Commodore 64 screen

AMIGA
Diskette: £14.95

The Amiga version is imminent but eluded us before going to press. Considering the nature of the game, a 'budget' price has been suitably set. Superior Software say there are no significant graphic changes are expected, but the sound will be better than on other versions.

COMMODORE 64/128
BBC
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £11.95

The two versions are to all intents and purposes very similar, except with the BBC Bono may only be controlled using the keyboard but joystick control is available with the Commodore version, and there is a music volume control on the Beeb version so that Michael Winterberg's jolly decomposition need not deafen you.

OVERALL 70%

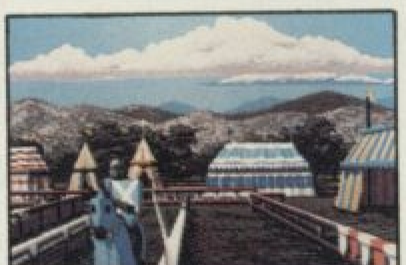
"Bone Cruncher **– an old-style game – presents sufficient challenge for worthy gameplay."**

VERSION UPDATE

Silver ST screen

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN
Mirrorsoft/Cinemaware
Atari ST Diskette: £24.95

IMPRESSIVE on the Amiga, harder gameplay on the 64, *Defender Of The Crown* has taken its time appearing on the ST, but it's here and it boasts some very attractive screens and a stirring soundtrack. Set in the age of knights, jousting, castles and fair maidens, the objective of your chosen Lord is to conquer rival Lords' domains, fight off attackers and loot castles in a quest to control medieval Britain. The action is viewed through linked series of cinematically animated scenes.



COMMENT

Considerable effort has been made to emulate the high quality graphics of the Amiga original with the result that most of the screens are virtually identical. The ST's in-game tunes are probably the best, if a touch tinny. A few omissions have been made, (Robin Hood no longer makes an appearance) but to make up for this, features like spying on other Lord's armies and rebels plotting mayhem throughout the land have been added. The Amiga's playability has been improved upon, making more of a wargame than the other versions. However, it still suffers from being too easy to get through.

ATARI ST
OVERALL 79%

SAVE THE LAST LANCE FOR ME

GRYZOR
Ocean

Konami's colourful, popular coin-op has taken Ocean's programming teams several months to assimilate the graphics and pack them into 8-bit machines – a job difficult to succeed in well, and one likely to be a bit of a curate's egg. Maestro **David Whittaker** has written the music, code by **Paul Owens** (Spectrum) and **John Brandwood** (Amstrad), **Mark Jones** did the graphics for both versions, and **Colin Porch** did the Commodore coding and **Steve Wahid** the graphics.

The name's Gryzor, Lance Gryzor. Lance?! What kind of a name is that for a soldier of fortune, a lone killer and a rather gutsy Konami Coin-op conversion? As Ocean's second major New Year licence (*Platoon* being the other), *Gryzor* has fared very well on the Amstrad (less so on the Spectrum) where it produces a challenge to test fast reactions and manages to contain considerable depth.

A bunch of slimy aliens have set up base in an uncharted part of Earth from where they plan to control the weather, eventually to bring about a new Ice Age and in its freezing wake, take control of the planet. *Gryzor* plays over three sections, each with a series of scenes, and, unless you are using a 128K machine, the game is a multi-load – one load per section.

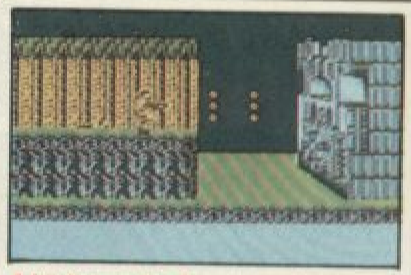
RAMBALIENS

Beginning in the heart of a horizontally scrolling jungle infested by the alien army of bullet-pumping Rambos, the first objective is to race along across the scenery, making use of platforms, to destroy the entrance to a tunnel maze. The 3-D maze – displayed graphically in proper vanishing-point perspective – is negotiated one screen. To get through wall targets must be destroyed which breaks down the force field blocking your path. Alien troops roam the tunnels intent on killing you by firing well-aimed bullets and rolling canisters down the alleyways – any collision proves fatal.

Having cleared the four-screen maze *Gryzor* plunges into a vertically scrolling Gorge, complete with more troops. Careful precision when jumping is essential if you are to make it through to the Inner Maze – a more difficult version of the first.

The final conquest of the aliens themselves takes place along a long horizontally scrolling backdrop – additional fire power which may have been collected along the way will be of use – the aliens here are no wimps. And that's all there is to it . . .

The compendium of actions and skills required to play through the different sections are not going to be quick to learn, and on the Amstrad at least, *Gryzor* is just as tough and exhilarating as the arcade original, but the inlay provides some useful tips – first: keep moving, and second: shoot everything.

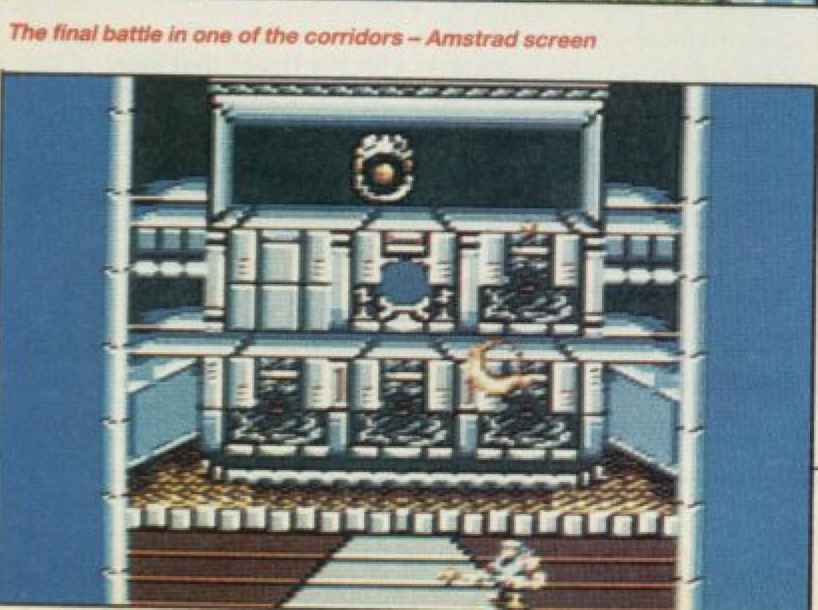


A bit flat on the Spectrum, Lance girds his loins to face the ultimate challenge

Incorporating graphics very similar to that of the arcade game, The Amstrad Gryzor blasts his way to success



The final battle in one of the corridors – Amstrad screen



SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette:£7.95

It was to be expected that the Spectrum Gryzor **would be forced to opt for monochromatic line drawings for the sprites, with a resultant lack of colour. This is a definite hindrance to playability when the furious activity becomes confusing due to the transparent characters and bullets. However, the bullets don't come so thick and fast as to make it completely frustrating. More annoying, for 48K users, is the serious lack of sound FX – it becomes a real problem in the maze sequences when so much is going on and a few hit or fire noises would have been a help. No problem, however, on the 128K because there are plenty of bells, whistles and tunes to keep ears lubricated. If the Spectrum** Gryzor **fails to rise into the major league it is probably because the coin-op is too difficult to suit the machine's capabilities. That said, there is enough in it to keep you going for several weeks.**

OVERALL 63%

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

Graphically superb, Gryzor **is highly colourful, but occasionally the amounts of colour used obscures some of the aliens and they don't stand out enough. Music and FX are not apparent on the 64K version, but 6128 owners will find it is all one load and there are plenty of aural delights. Of the two 8-bit conversions we have seen so far,** Gryzor **on the Amstrad is certainly the most action-packed and difficult, in fact a very powerful conversion which should not disappoint hardened arcade addicts with itchy trigger fingers.**

OVERALL 82%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

We have only seen a static demo screen so far, which indicates that it won't be as colourful as the Amstrad version, but in most respects playability should be similar. Watch out for a version update soon.

> "Gryzor **is just as tough and exhilarating as the arcade original . . .**"

THE MORTIFICATION OF ARTHUR

TANGLEWOOD
Microdeal

Microdeal's 16-bit output is increasing healthily; *Tanglewood* – code by **Ian Murray-Watson** – is one of several imminent Atari and Amiga releases which includes the commando-action *Leatherneck*, *Soccer* and (at long last) a licensed version of the cult horror film *Fright Night*. *Tanglewood* is an all-graphic adventure boasting over 700K of pictures, by **Pete Lyon**.

Uncle Arthur buys the mining rights to the planet T'ngl-y-wd from a large company with a poor cash-flow situation, one probably occasioned, as Arthur discovers, by the fact that the planet is not particularly ore-rich. Uncle Arthur decides to cut his losses and is about to abandon plans for becoming rich, when a dog (type), disorientated by an earthquake, attacks a local whom Uncle Arthur rescues in one of his mining mobiles. The injured inhabitant turns out to be the planet's greatest sage. In appreciation of his service, the local people let Arthur into a secret and tell him about the existence of precious gemstones.

When the large company (the one with the cash-flow problem) hear about this, they muscle in, sabotaging Arthur's mobiles and then stealing the mining rights sales agreement documents. Uncle Arthur wants them returned to prove his ownership. However, due T'ngl-y-wd's inhospitable atmosphere, all searching and recovering must be done by his mining mobiles from the relative safety of the computer control room. He needs help from someone capable of controlling his outdated mobiles, someone with some expertise in computers . . . but who can he turn to? Got it in one.

A TANGLED WEB

A primary screen depicts the current mining mobile under control and its present location. Bordering this is a control panel from which information and actions are accessed. Most systems are controlled by flicking switches. For example the panel's left side is lined with switches representing on/off modes for each of five mining mobiles – only one may controlled at a time. Four switches for saving/loading a game position, quiting a game, pausing and turning the sound on or off are situated below the main screen.

To the screen's right an icon indicates which mobile is currently being used, its inventory and any objects in its vicinity. Various gauges on the panel depict heat, time and energy remaining to the mobile (energy may be replenished during daylight hours by the simple act of non-use or the more complex routine of finding and recharging batteries). The game is pointer-and-mouse-controlled, clicking on the desired action.

In fact mobile movement gets annoying. Steering is unnecessarily difficult as the mouse has to be pushed from a central starting point in the direction required. This may not sound too bad, but as mobiles have their own paths and the amount of 'push' in any direction is the dominant one (to counter a move a push on the mouse is required which is at least the same length as the original move), you soon find yourself running out of desktop as you push the mouse farther and farther from the central starting position in an effort to get the mobile to change direction.

Each mobile has a function - one is an ancient mining model, five travels on water, three has anti-gravity properties, and so on – and they have to be used cooperatively to complete the game. At the very start you discover that mobile four is actually unserviceable, so the first task is to repair it using those that are working.

Items dotted around the landscape help or hinder progress; telephone booths, churches, Dog Crystals and Ice Emeralds are all there either to provide information, resources or death for the player. A time-warp function is also available to mobiles although it should be used with some restraint as it drains energy at a drastic rate.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

The ST graphics in Tanglewood **are slightly biased toward purple, though nevertheless they remain pretty, and everything within the game works quite well, sound, animation and the overall feel of it. Unfortunately this is a case where the mobiles' control method becomes sufficiently frustrating as to detract from the gameplay and discourage the player to continue.**

OVERALL 65%

A mining mobile being not so mobile – ST screen



AMIGA
Diskette: £19.95

Microdeal promise an Amiga version will be released shortly.

" . . . the control becomes sufficiently frustrating to detract from gameplay and discourage the player . . . "

A NIP IN THE AIR?

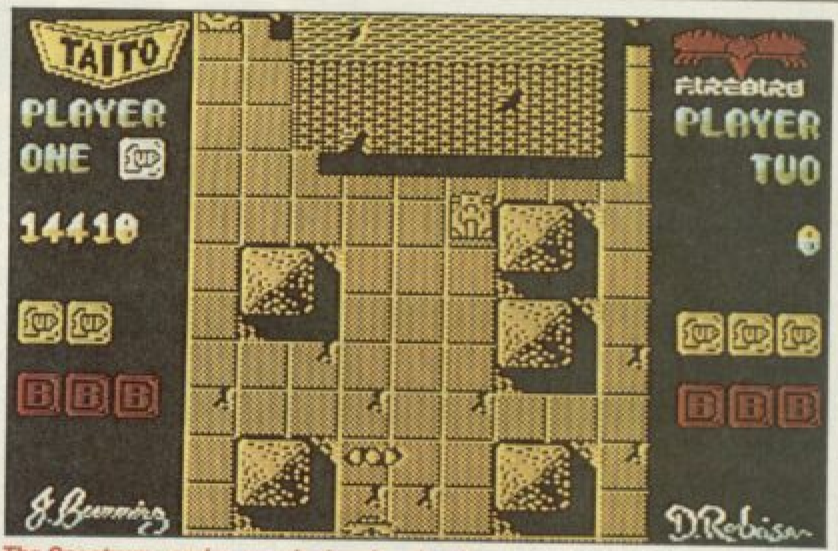
FLYING SHARK
Firebird

Firebird's conversion of the arcade hit has a first Telecom Soft appearance by **Dominic Robinson** (ex-Hewson), as the Graftgold programmer who did the Spectrum conversion, while **Catalyst Coders** took care of it for the Commodore. The packaging confuses by its (excellent **David Rowe**) picture of a World War II Kittyhawk aeroplane, when the game involves World War I bi-planes. Never mind, the story tells of a one-man fight through hell and licensing deals from Taito arcade machines.

This is a respectable rendition of the original vertically scrolling Taito coin-op, which basically pits a single player against hordes of other fighter planes, tanks, guns and seaborne craft, killing everything that flies or scrolls along the ground towards you. Flying low over enemy territory (which could be Japan, but is probably a fantasy land!), the objective is to get through all five levels of increasing difficulty, learning the strategies required to survive.

Extra weaponry is collected – à la *Nemesis* – as the game progresses and dependent on the amount of enemies shot – doubled firepower and a wider field of fire are two earlier additions. Destroying an entire squadron of yellow planes earns 1000 bonus points, destroying the red squadron provides extra fire power through a collectable symbol, and blue squadrons give an additional plane.

Little more than an out-and-out scrolling shoot-'em-up – maybe what Elite's *1942* should have resembled last Christmas – Flying *Shark* does not attempt to innovate over past shoot-'em-ups, but represents some of the best around. And it is a good conversion, if a little tricky to get to grips with.



The Spectrum version may lack colour but its gameplay is still on a par with the Commodore

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95

As you would expect from Dominic Robinson, the Spectrum Flying Shark **is a fine and very playable conversion. Although the playing area is monochromatic, the drawing is so highly detailed, using effective shading to highlight the different terrain, that it wins out. A problem with other mono scrolling shoot-'em-ups, that of the bullets blending with the background so they become hard to see, is overcome in** Flying Shark **by making them large and so simple to spot. It is also more playable than the Commodore version, with more fair levels of difficulty.**

OVERALL 83%

THE KNIGHT

DARK CASTLE
Mirrorsoft

Silicon Beach Software (those responsible for *Dark Castle*) is an American company which specialises in business programs for the Macintosh. This step into games software is unprecedented for them, although they appear to have been bitten by the bug as there are rumours of a sequel, *Beyond Dark Castle*, whispered in the halls of the Mac User. SB Software's claim to fame is the eponymous graphics package *Super Paint*, available only on the Macintosh. This art bent helps to explain the attention to detail present in the backdrops used in the game.

The drawbridge slowly closes behind the adventurer and he stands alone in the great hall. Four doorways beckon to him, challenging him to enter. He knows that he must pass through each of these doors in turn in order to defeat the Black Knight and his legions of evil, thus restoring peace and harmony to the land once more. Many have tried before him, all have failed, yet tales of their attempts include morsels of information which may aid our adventurer. This would be just as well; *Dark Castle* may be a very attractive looking game, but the character control the designers have decided to employ, makes it very difficult, and ultimately frustrating, to play.

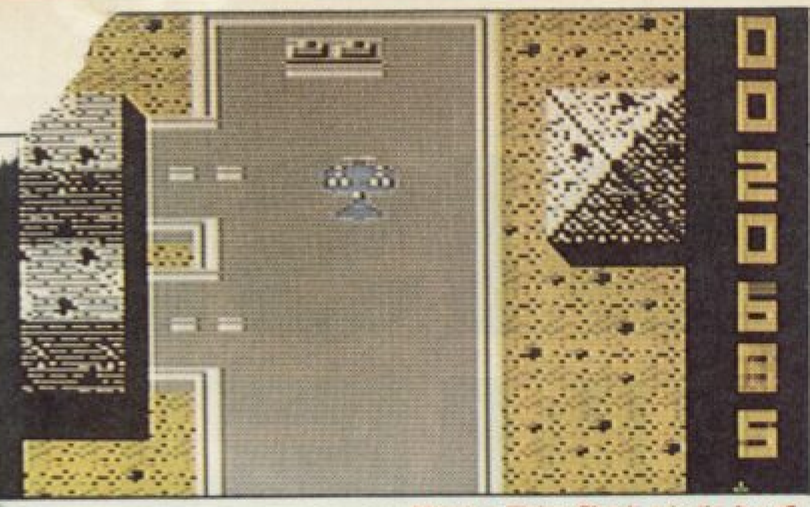
It is rumoured that Merlin resides within the Dark Castle and is believed to have mastery of the fireball magic required to defeat the Black Knight. There are also stories of a magic shield hidden deep in the Knight's domain, which gives the bearer limited powers of invisibility – some help against the poisonous bats, rats, deadly vultures, mutants, dragons and vicious henchmen of the Black Knight. These are to be defeated or avoided if any progress through the 14 levels is to be made.

Each scenario lurking behind the four doors requires the player to throw rocks at adversaries (until such time as he controls the fireball magic and his rocks transform into balls of fire (very painful!). There are ladders, platforms, steps, swinging ropes and trapdoors to negotiate before you reach the goal at the end of each level, be it a magic weapon or the key to get out into the great hall again.

Positioned throughout the castle are bottles of an elixir, which fights the effect of the rat/bat bites, and plenty of rocks are available for throwing at the evil creatures which constantly attack. Character control is via mouse and keyboard, keyboard or joystick and keyboard.

Four doors to choose from . . . which will it be? PC screen





Mine's a Flying Shark, what's Jaws? – Commodore screen

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £12.95

The attractively coloured graphics make Flying Shark **pleasing to play at first. But after a few attempts, frustration seeps because playability is sometimes unfairly tough, and new enemy squadrons appear infrequently enough that building extra fire power is difficult. A shame, because the competent programming means the graphics and sound work to good effect. If only the playability could have been tweaked to match the quality of the Spectrum version,** Flying Shark **could have made an first-rate game.**

OVERALL 74%

OTHER VERSIONS

Amstrad CPC and Atari ST versions are planned but nothing has been seen of them yet. The often slow and jerky vertical scroll of the Amstrad is likely to be a serious drawback, making it less impressive than the others. However, if the playability is pitched just right on the ST, there is no reason why it should not be best of the bunch.

"Flying Shark **does not innovate, but represents the best of shoot-'em-ups."**

SHIFT

PC

Diskette: £24.95

Visually Dark Castle **looks really good; the background and character graphics are among the best on the PC. It would be wise to opt for joystick control because the keyboard controls for jumping, throwing and generally moving about are unfairly difficult and complex to use, taking into account the speed required to act in some situations within the game. The mouse control is virtually redundant as its only use is for aiming and throwing rocks, movement still requires the keyboard. Sound throughout** Dark Castle **is of the usual PC standard, and there is an option to turn it off.**

OVERALL 53%

AMIGA and ATARI ST

Diskette: £24.95

Available any day, we did not receive the Amiga and ST Dark Castles **in time for review, and speculative comparison with the PC adaption is dangerous to say the least! Watch out for version updates.**

"Dark Castle**, an attractive looking game, is very difficult, and ultimately frustrating . . ."**

PARADISE UNGAINED

PLATOON
Ocean

The film, starring Charlie Sheen, was a fair critical and box-office success. Ocean's licensed game appears at a timely moment, as the hire-video rekindles interest. *Platoon* takes five raw recruits through five sections of original gameplay, based on sequences from the film, created in-house at Ocean. The Commodore version reviewed here is programmed by **Zack Townsend**, graphics by **Andrew Sleigh** and **Martin MacDonald**, with music and sound effects by **Jonathan Dunn**. Included in the package is the large film poster, and an audio cassette with the film's theme music.



(All pictures from the Commodore 64 version): Deep in the jungle something blurred – first level.

The Vietnam war was a filthy business; muddled, ill-led, drug-ridden, soul-destroying and ultimately pointless. It is to Ocean's credit that they have produced a game that, given its need to entertain and thrill, still manages in some degree to convey the film's sad feeling, and the claustrophobia of the dense Vietnamese jungle where the enemy was as often as not the incompetence of the American officers.

The first section, set deep in the Vietnamese forest, is a maze of bushes and trees swarming with enemy soldiers, viewed from the side. First objective is to locate a box of explosives well-hidden in the tangled undergrowth and then battle through traps, avoid snipers and assassins until the bridge leading to a village is found and destroyed. Each of the five recruits can take up to four shots before they are killed in action, however, if caught by a booby trap it means instant death.

Across the bridge lies a village now overrun by VC (the Viet Cong were North Vietnamese guerilla soldiers). Three objectives here: collect a map, torch and trapdoor. The village huts are all accessible and when entered the outer walls disappear revealing objects inside which can be examined.

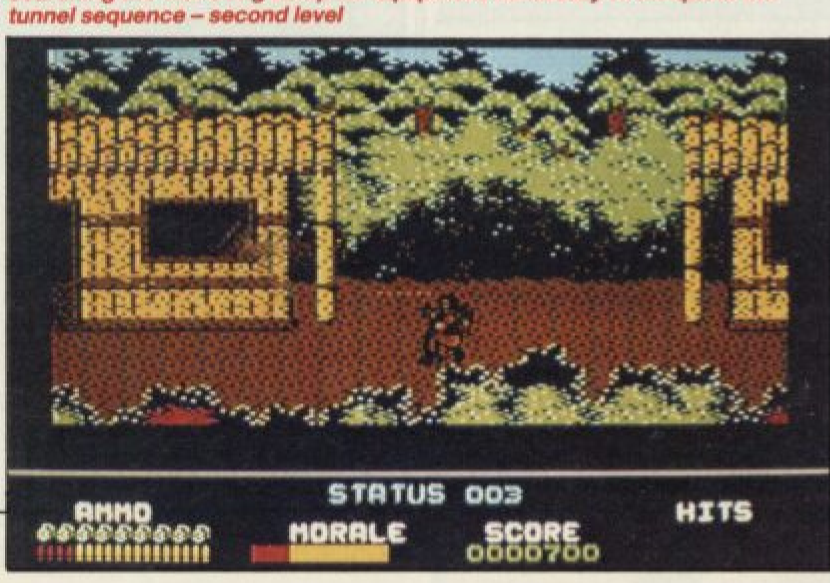
BUNKERED

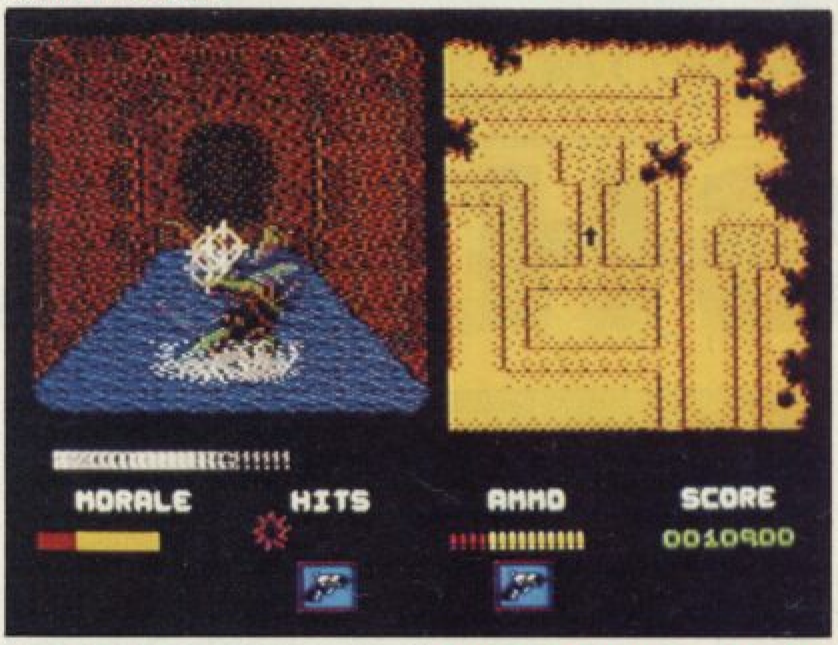
Jungle warfare is normally thought of in terms of huge trees and dense undergrowth, but the VC created entire underground cities of maze-like bunkers, burrowed out of the very earth between the tree roots. They were lethally booby-trapped.

The third game section takes place in such an underground tunnel maze. The platoon has been left to guard the village, so one 'life' is available, although the standard four hits can be endured before death. However, there is a second chance but it means beginning the section all over again.

The tunnels are displayed in 3-D, looking forward; to the right of the action window is a map to guide you around. Bunker rooms, concealed at the end of tunnels, hold vital supplies – medical supplies are invaluable to restore health, ammunition is also available to combat the enemy who spring from corners or rise from the water-flooded tunnel sections. When a VC is encountered, fire comes under your direct control, and once the enemy is disposed of control reverts back to movement around the tunnels. Before you can exit the maze, two boxes of flares and a compass are needed to help in the fourth section.

Searching the Viet Cong camp for equipment necessary to complete the tunnel sequence – second level





Down in the VC bunkers, stay alert, the enemy attack from all sides – third level

ENEMY MINE

On emerging from the maze, night has fallen. You are trapped in a foxhole surrounded by Viet Cong. To provide enough light to see the hidden troops in the undergrowth, one of the limited supply of flares can be sent up, but its light only lasts for a short while and soon the screen returns darkness once more.

In the fifth and final section, back in the jungle, the action is viewed from slightly above. Avoiding the bombs, trip-wires and enemy fire, the object is to locate a safe foxhole in which to take cover from an imminent American napalm strike. But Sergeant Barnes blocks your way – the man responsible for the death of the platoon's leader. Barnes, equipped with machine gun, tries to gun you down. The

only way to combat him is by a frontal assault with grenades. Five direct hits are needed to take him out before you can enter the foxhole, take cover and complete the game.

Platoon has all the hallmarks of a highly polished game. It has been well thought out to provide a variety and depth of gameplay well above the normal glut of film licences. Each section offers something different – from the arcade/adventure of the underground maze to the out-and-out shooting gallery of the bunker scene.

Flares show off your targets . . . but not for long! Fourth level



COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £10.95
Diskette: £12.95
It is a tough game, demanding a lot of practice and perseverance to get through to the later, immensely difficult screens. If this seems frustrating at first, it only adds greatly to the challenge. The scenes are varied, playable, graphically detailed and capture superbly the harsh atmosphere of the tunnel fighting and jungle combat that dominated the Vietnam war. The use of dark, murky colours doesn't always work, but in Platoon **they add to the game's dirty, grimy realism. Really successful film tie-ins have been few and far between,** Platoon **is one of the few. A sure-fire winner from Ocean.**
OVERALL 92%

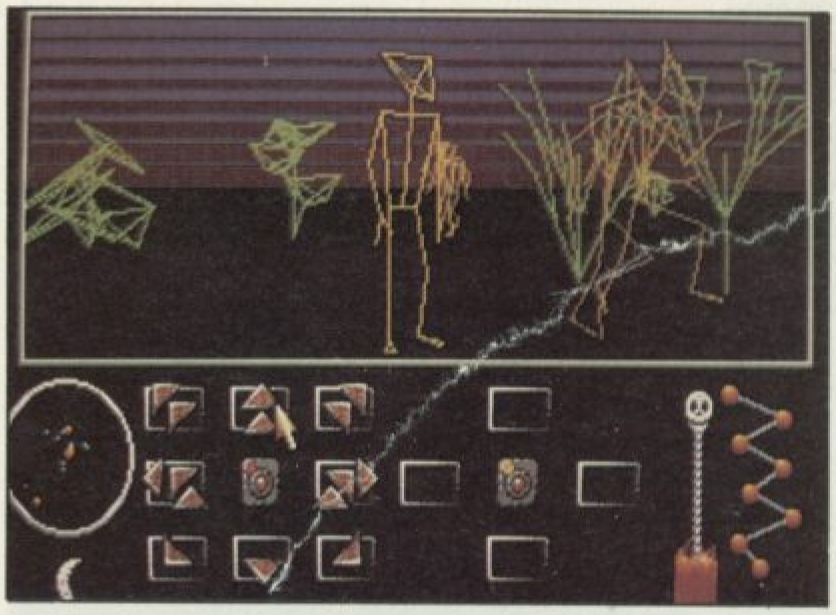
SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £10.95
+3 Diskette: £14.95
AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £10.95
Diskette: £14.95
ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95
AMIGA
Diskette: £24.95
The other 8-bit games are almost ready, and should be on sale by the time this issue hits the streets. Although we've only seen bits of the Spectrum version, it is looking good (surprising in comparison to the Commodore with its heavy reliance on murky colours). The 16-bit conversions are in the hands of Choice Software, should be ready during January, and we will have version updates hopefully for next month.

" . . . dirty, grimy realism, Platoon **has all the hallmarks of a highly polished game."**

ON THE SEVENTH DAY . . .

ECO
Ocean

From so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.' – *The Origin Of Species*, **Charles Darwin 1859**. So begins *Eco*, another game from **Denton Design** (*Shadowfire*, *Mutants*, *Frankie Goes To Hollywood*, the forthcoming *Where Time Stood Still* etc), a surreal program and their first on the 16-bit machines.



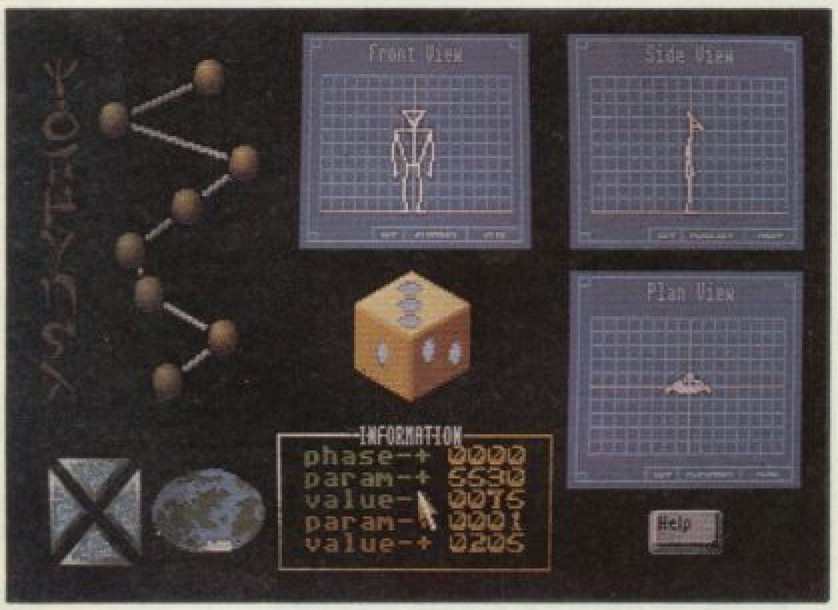
Eco, the game of survival, takes you into a primordial world filled with evolving creatures and lifeforms where only the fit survive. Starting off as a lowly fly or spider, your ultimate goal is to become a more complex being, reproducing more capable offspring (such as man or a similar lifeform) in the fight for species domination.

The more immediate task, however, is to locate food and prevent starvation. For flies and spiders food comes in the shape of plants and worms; selecting the food icon sets the currently controlled creature off in the direction of the nearest foodstuff. The player's meal isn't always willing to be eaten and often scuttles off or flies away (plants merely wither away). Higher level creatures, naturally enough, prey on larger creatures.

MULTIPLICATION

Once food has been eaten, a reproduction icon appears; use this in conjunction with the radar to locate a similar creature which whom you can mate, following which the gene manipulation screen appears. Each time you reproduce, a further gene can be unlocked for manipulation, the more genes unlocked, the more species become accessible. Once a species is chosen, you can then reenter the *Eco* world in a new, stronger, hardier form.

At the beginning, the genes of man and other complex-structure creations are not accessible and only through subsequent generations, as further genes are unlocked, can you reach the level of man and beyond. A skull on a pedestal indicates the player's expected lifespan; flames representing death slowly climb the stem and, upon reaching the skull, the current creature dies. Eat food and the skull rises from the flames, get injured or stay without food for any length of time and the skull falls into the ever burning flames below.



HUNTER HUNTED

Movement is controlled through the standard Denton icon system, the mouse control, as usual, working well. Special icons are used to search for food and for reproduction. For winged creatures there are take off and land icons. The world of Eco is viewed through animated vector graphics, and the more complex creatures are highly realistic in their movements. Watching a human run across the landscape is a beautiful sight to behold, and especially breathtaking is when the player's viewpoint pans around the running figure.

Sometimes the tables are turned; you are not always the hunter, more complex creatures are out for food too. Your life is over if you get eaten or trodden on by a predator, starve to death or simply die of old-age. A subsequent post-mortem lists the number of generations survived, amount of food eaten and the reason for death.

There is an extra bonus for MIDI owners in the form of a further soundtrack, although the standard tune accompanying the game is very good in itself. *Eco* is brilliantly innovative, and a lot of work has gone into the game's appearance, character animation and unique graphical techniques, but unfortunately it has suffered as a result, being let down by a lack of real challenge.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

Denton Design's trademark seems to be the use of icons at every available opportunity. As well as the mouse, a joystick option is provided, but it is pretty difficult to control the creature once it's on the move. The game has everything that shows off the ST to its best, but lacks the essential ingredients of gameplay and content. Wandering around the world of Eco **is interesting at first, but even with the multitude of species to choose from, most are either of no use whatsoever or are simply minor variations on existing creatures (does it really make a difference if a man has a slightly larger nose than in a previous generation?). The process of reaching a higher level is rather simple, just select a creature with a large number of mates and an adequate food supply and the player should find it pretty easy to get through to the human stage.** Eco **is an interesting game with some notable effects, but little in the way of game foundations.**

OVERALL 78%

AMIGA
Diskette: £24.95

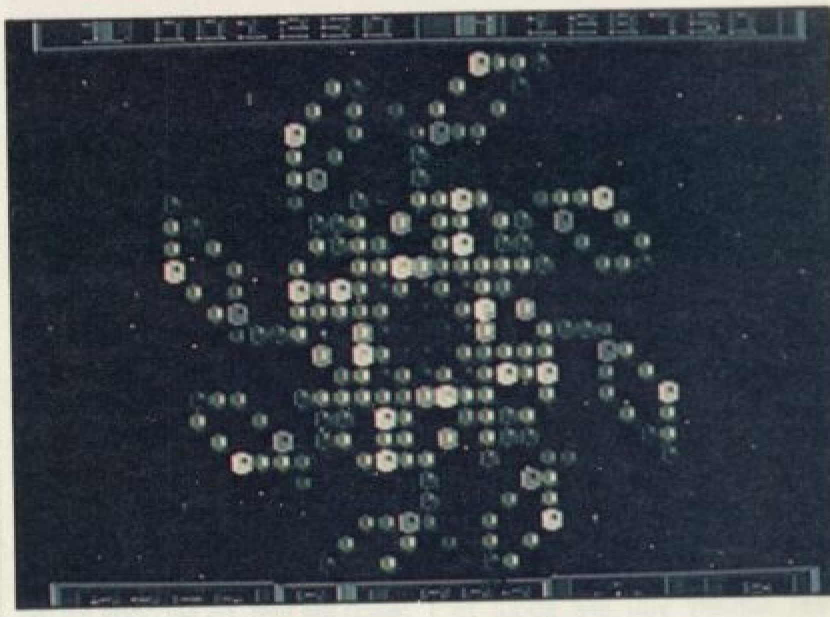
Should be ready about now, and be similar to the ST Eco**. We will do an update if we see a copy in time for next month's issue.**

" . . . brilliantly innovative, Eco **is let down by a lack of real challenge."**

HOME OUT OF RANGE

HUNTER'S MOON
Thalamus

For their games to date, **Thalamus** have relied entirely on **Stavros Fasoulas**'s creative programming and the three games *Sanxion*, *Delta* and *Quedex*. Now, with Stavros tied up in compulsory National Service for his mother-Finland, it's the turn of Thalamus newcomer **Martin Walker** to bring us something special. Martin's previous credits include *Rupert And The Toymaker's Party*, *Back To The Future* (neither were received particularly well) and *Chameleon* for Electric Dreams, which did do well. *Hunter's Moon* is a very different kettle of insects from any of his previous releases.



Travelling through space in his ship the Hunter, the hero of the game plunges into a black hole eventually emerging in Loopspace, a desolate region containing crystalline structures, hive-like space cities inhabited by worker- and soldier-aliens who maintain and protect each city.

To escape this nightmare universe the Hunter has to collect vital Starcells from each of the four planets within each of the 16 star systems (are your maths good? – that is a grand total of 128 levels to decimate). Each space city is protected by workers moving in continuous circles around each network, constantly repairing any structures damaged by the Hunter's lasers. Worker-aliens, though indestructible, pose no offensive threat; the soldier aliens on the other hand, fire laser bolts at any moving thing. Contact with aliens or the city structure itself is fatal, losing the pilot a life in the process.

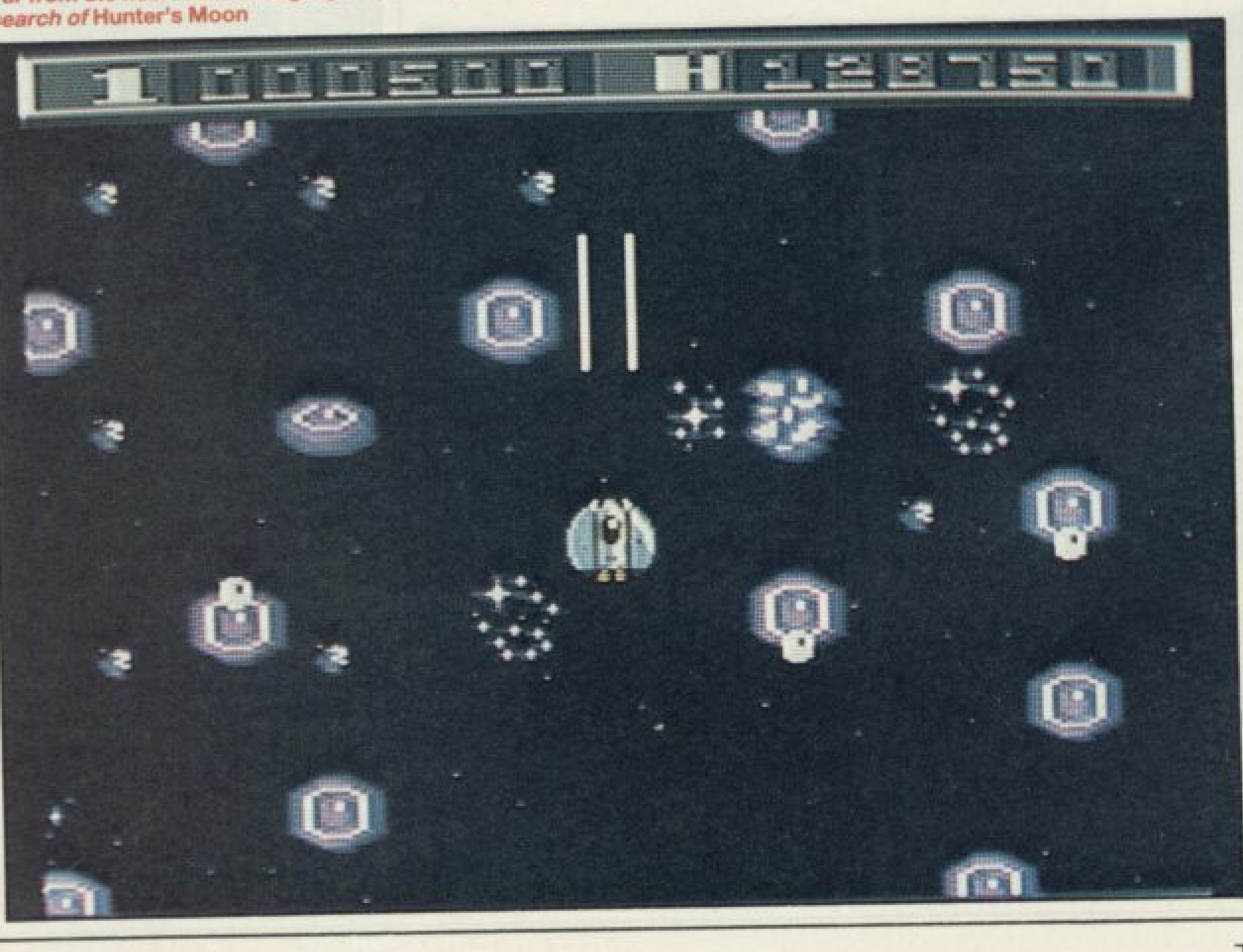
The number of starcells to collect is incremented with each subsequent level in the star systems. On the first level of each system the Hunter needs only collect one Starcell, on level two it is two, level three, three and level four of each system, Hunter collects four Starcells to escape the system. Collect a Starcell within a brief starting time and a coordinate is gained, collect all four and the Hunter can skip harder levels to move straight onto the next star system.

Once out of a system, Hunter enters a bonus game where the ship remains stationary while soldier-aliens encircle it, firing from time to time. To successfully complete this screen and gain the reward of an extra life, you need to destroy all eight of the orbiting aliens. Once through this screen, it's onto the next, tougher system with its four hive-cities.

Hunter's Moon is deceptive in that beneath the simplistic gameplay there lurks a very decent, interesting, addictive game with plenty of challenge. And the extras within the game add to its immense appeal, features such as the Loopspace trainer – basically a relaxation screen for battle-weary Hunter pilots (in a similar vein to Llamasoft's *ColourSpace*, with its joystick-controlled lights and neat patterns) and a respray facility for pilots who want a change of paintwork in mid-game.

Thalamus have come up trumps again with their latest release.

Far from the nearest hamburger joint, battling through crystals in space in search of Hunter's Moon



COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £12.99

Thalamus products are always highly polished and thoroughly playable, and this applies to Hunter's Moon **as well. It isn't exactly original – yet another shoot-'em-up – but it oozes playability and is pure, unadulterated (and unashamed) arcade action.** Hunter's Moon **has been put together with a high degree of skill and professionalism, the graphics and sound effects, coupled with stirring music, testify to that. This is a game requiring the dexterity of** Quedex **and the shoot-'em-up skills of** Sanxion **and** Delta **combined in order to succeed. A great game standing head and shoulders above the masses of shoot-'em-ups currently on the market.**

OVERALL 90%

OTHER FORMATS

Your guess is as good as ours! But probably not . . .

" . . . a very decent, interesting, addictive game with immense appeal . . . "

TESTABUSTER

OUT RUN
Mastertronic/Sega and US Gold

Mastertronic are marketing the Sega cartridge conversion from this very popular coin-op hit, while **US Gold** deal with the popular micro versions. US Gold claimed well before Christmas that *Out Run* was selling like hot cakes long before any reviews were written, for the copies were in the shops to meet the Christmas sales period before review copies were despatched. Was it worth the purchase? The main section of this review deals with the official Sega version.



US Gold's brave attempt at outrunning an arcade hit

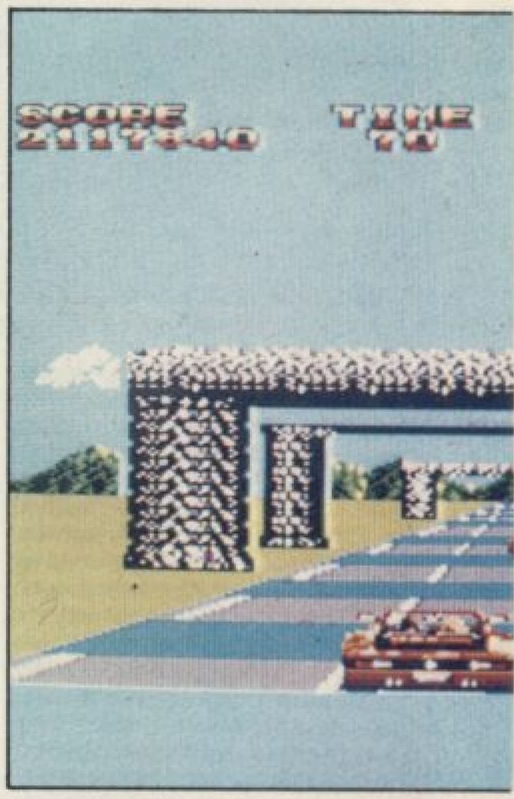
Aren't you a lucky chap; a nice sunny afternoon, at the wheel of a Ferrari Testarossa, girlfriend at your side, out for a pleasant drive. Well actually you are about to participate in possibly the most gruelling race of your life, as you sit tensely at the starting line waiting for the chequered flag.

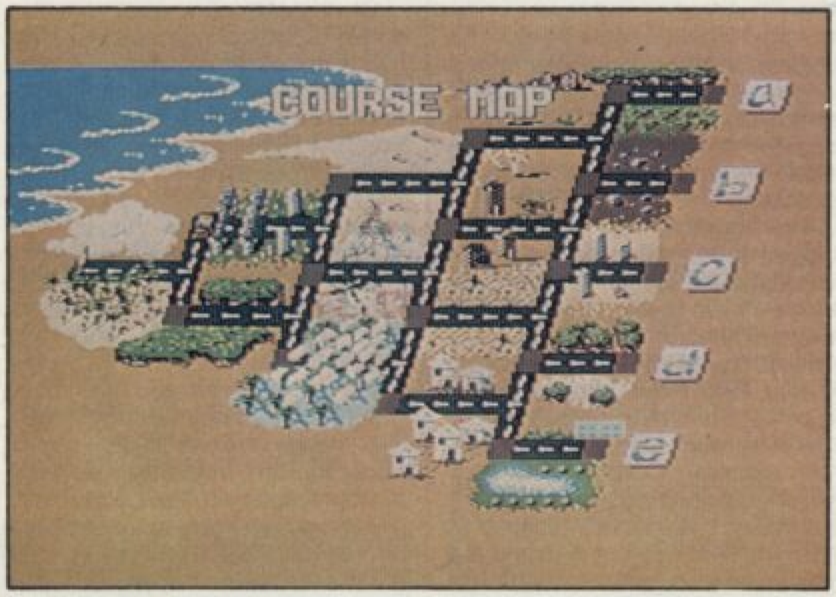
Hold on though, you forgot to switch on the radio and there are three in-game tunes to choose from, *Magical Sound Shower*, *Passing Breeze* and *Splash Wave*. Having selected music to drive by, you are presented with a view of your car at the starting point – the chequered flag drops, and you are off. Control is simple, pressing up on the direction button puts you in low gear, pressing down selects high gear, button one is the brake, button two the accelerator, and pressing left or right on the direction button steers the car.

As the race starts, it is wise to select low gear until you have gained sufficient speed to warrant the change to high (usually at around 170 kph). There are five landscapes to be raced through, each with its own check point. An 80-second time limit is allowed to reach the first, 65 seconds for the next and so on, decreasing as you go along; however, crossing a check point within the time limit adds those remaining precious seconds to the next stage's time allowance. Failing to reach the end of a route within the limit means disqualification and an end to the game.

At various points along the track, forks in the road appear. These allow you to choose which of the goal lines you wish to pursue, and there are five in all: the Vinyard, Death Valley, Desolation Hill, Autobahn and Lakeside. But whichever path you choose to reach your goal, there are plenty of people on the road trying to stop you, so good luck, you will probably need it.

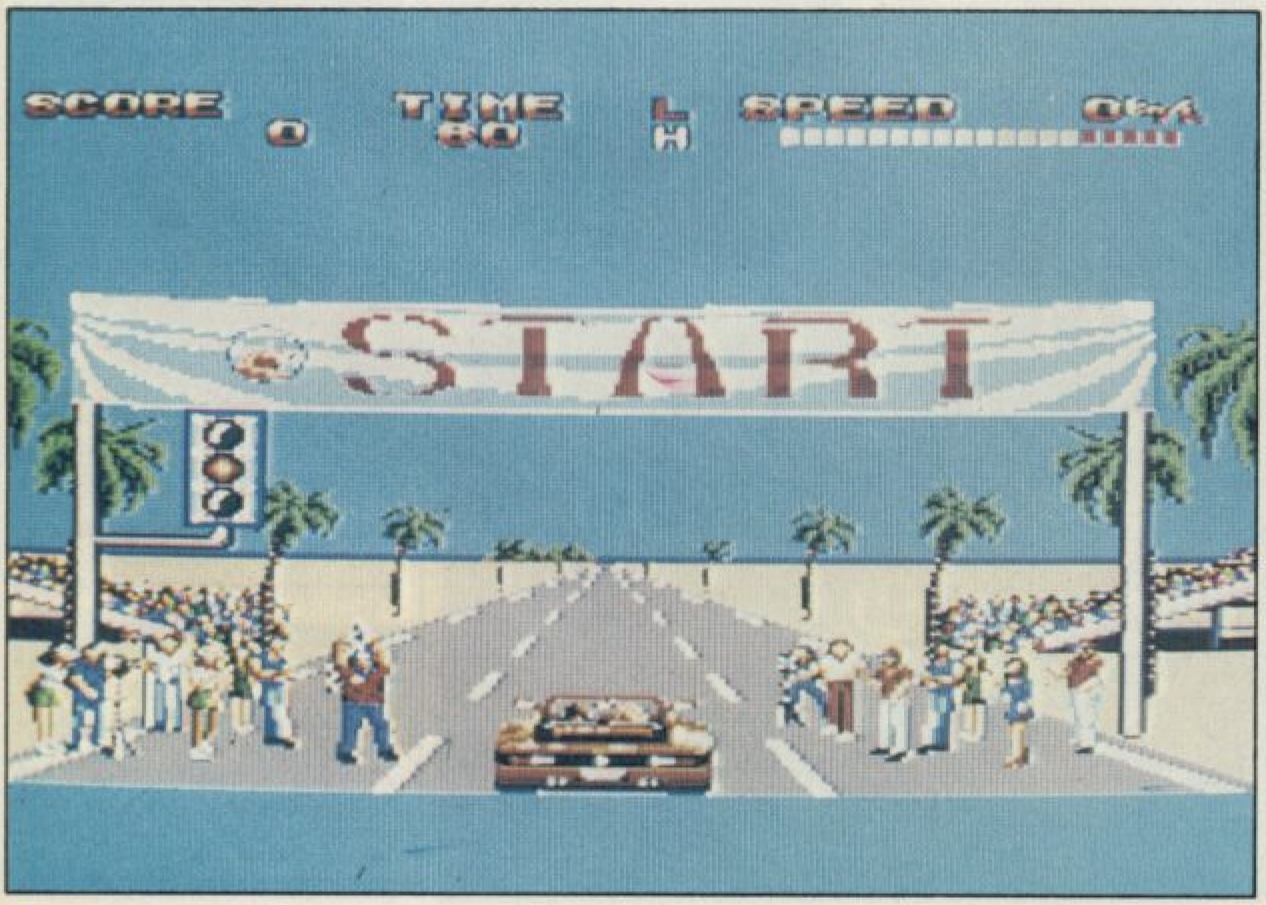
Of all the versions, the Sega cartridge comes closest to the original coin-op in appearance, feel and addictive qualities, but nonetheless, it does suffer in comparison. The home micro versions have all had to make their own compromises with memory size.

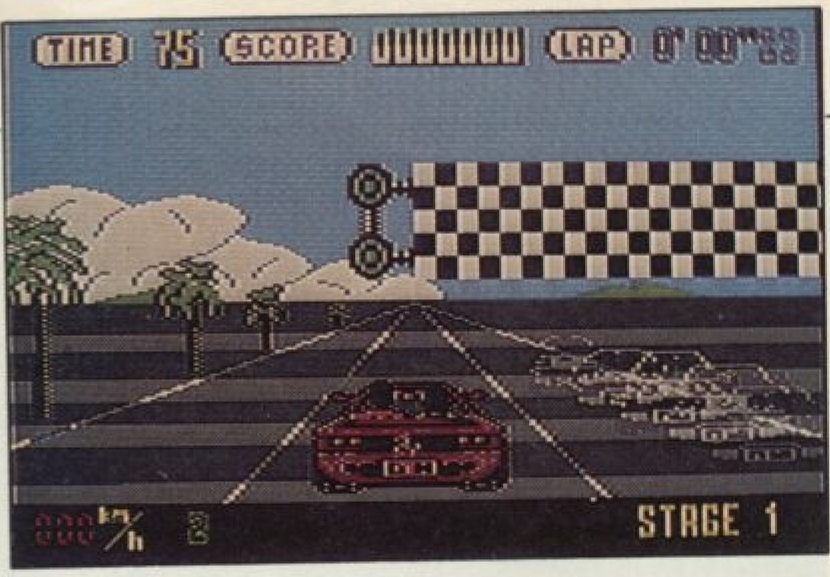


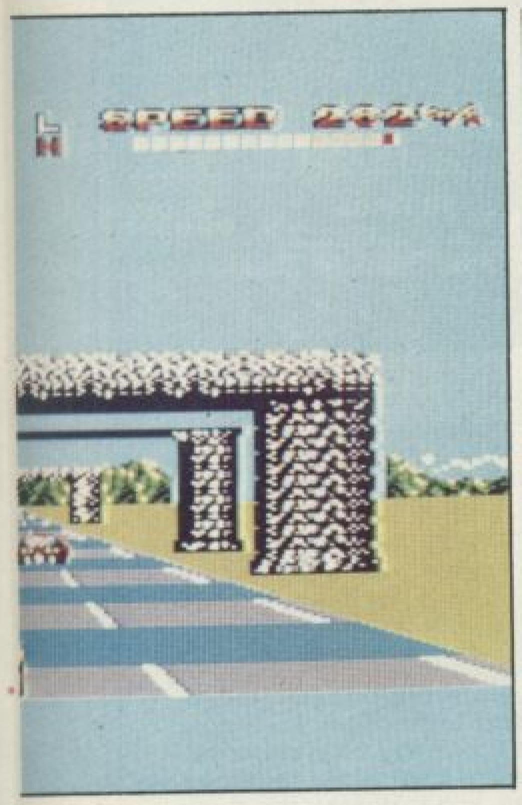


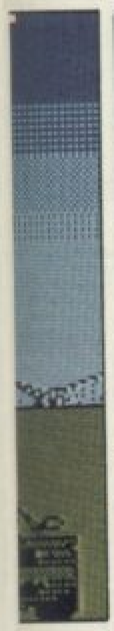


Perhaps not unsurprisingly, it works best of all on the Sega









SEGA
Two-Mega Cartridge: £24.95

Out Run is instantly very playable, with good sound – although the three tunes do rather resemble each other, they do add a nice atmosphere. The graphics, however, are a let down; the backgrounds are well drawn, but on the racetrack things are not all good. Passing rival cars often causes them to judder violently or disappear totally, and the same fate occasionally afflicts your own car when spinning or flipping in an accident. Equally, the overhead gantries fail to work and appear to jerk forwards and backwards rather than pass overhead as they should. But despite the tacky graphics it's not all that bad.

OVERALL 72%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £8.99

Nearly all the features of the arcade machine have been squeezed into the Spectrum, but at the expense of speed and an arduous multi-load. At the end of each track, the action freezes while another level is loaded, and depending on the course taken, waits can be teeth-grittingly long. The sound is surprisingly good, and even though the road stops a little short of the horizon, the 3-D effect is convincing. Playability is unfortunately poor as the car is often sluggish to respond to joystick or keyboard command, and when things get busy, the action seriously slows down, which can be very frustrating. US Gold still have yet to prove that you can squeeze a gallon into a pint pot!

OVERALL 61%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99

Initial impressions are very favourable, with the Commodore version of the classic Sega race game seeming to sport nearly all the features of the original, including two reasonable renditions of the arcade soundtrack, hills, and some colourful, if rather blocky graphics. The 3-D is fast and convincing, and generally the game is playable. In fact, the only things missing are the intersections, which have been removed and replaced by five different tracks, one of which is loaded at the start to represent a possible course that could be taken on the arcade version. All this sounds good, but unfortunately Out Run has a serious flaw, which only becomes apparent on playing. It's far, far too easy, and completing a course within a few goes is a task even the most novice of budding Testarossa drivers won't find difficult. Consequently, lasting appeal is severely lacking.

OVERALL 67%

OTHER FORMATS

The promising-sounding Atari ST version should be released during February (£19.99), and the Amstrad conversion (£9.99 cassette, £14.99 diskette) should be available at the time of reading. At present, an Amiga version is unannounced.

" . . . the Sega cartridge comes closest to the original coin-op, but nonetheless, suffers in comparison."

VERSION UPDATE

Birds of a feather

INTO THE EAGLE'S NEST
Pandora

Amiga, Atari ST £19.95

FIRST RELEASED at the beginning of 1987, the game was reviewed excellently on the Commodore 64 and Amstrad, and received 82% overall in the CRASH April issue.

Eagles Nest, a highly fortified German garrison, poses a major threat to the advancing Allied army. Your task is to enter the stronghold, rescue three imprisoned team-mates and destroy Eagles Nest before the forces within can launch a counter attack against you.

The game is a *Gauntlet* clone, with an overhead view of the numerous and various castle rooms. The main character is in green so as to be easily identifiable amidst the teeming grey of German soldiers. Traverse the maze of rooms and corridors picking up food, medical supplies, keys, ammunition and elevator passes to gain entrance to further floors in the castle, and avoid being shot by the enemy. Three missions may be chosen: blow up the fortress, rescue the prisoners or both.



From overhead, even the privvies look attractive

COMMENT

All the gameplay that existed in the 8-bit versions of Eagles Nest is still present, including the extra rewards to be received for recovering stolen art treasures. Although obviously neither machine has been utilised to its full capabilities for the conversion, there are some nice graphics and sampled sound throughout. A thoroughly competent Gauntlet style game, Eagles Nest is large in scale and provides stacks to do.

AMIGA/ATARI ST
OVERALL 78%

SNACK ATTACK

GARFIELD (IN THE BIG, FAT HAIRY DEAL)

The Edge

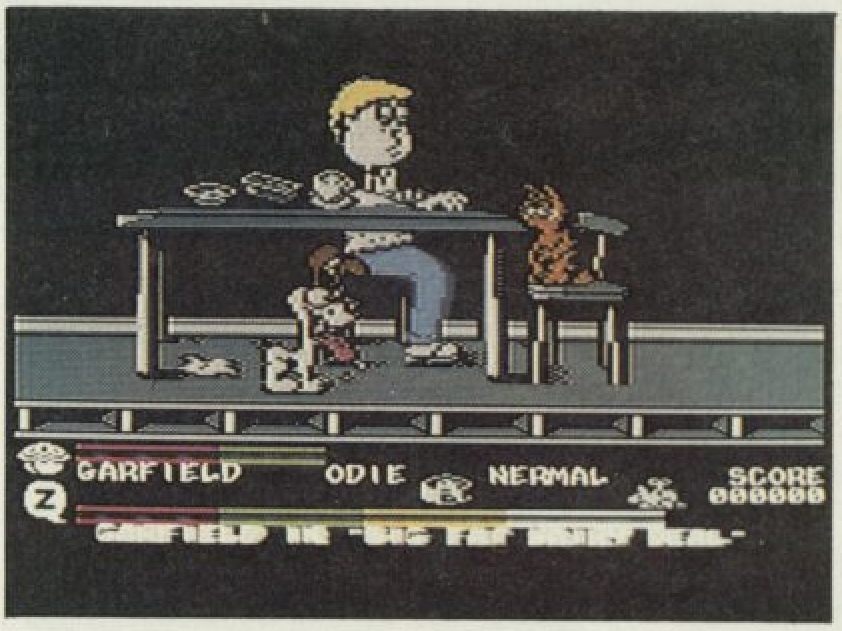
Cuddly toys, cards, stickers, badges, mugs, shirts, pillows and millions of other things . . . not only things Garfield has eaten, but items Garfield has been, featured on or starred in. Now Jim Davis's fat feline gets his own computer game, pampered by **Martin Sneep (Mat)** on the Commodore and ex-Melbourne House programmer **Steve Cargill** is taking care of the Spectrum version. Programmers for the 16-bit versions, due later in the year, have not yet been appointed, but as Mat said, 'We may be doing them . . . when we learn 68000 code!'

Arlene, Garfield's girlfriend, has been taken to the Pound and for once Garfield decides he had better do something about it. Making use of his two faithful chums, Odie (the world's stupidest dog) and Nermal (the world's cutest kitten), Garfield sets about his task. The adventure begins in the house with the graphics of cartoon quality – everything is taken from the comic strips drawings, from Garfield himself to the trays of essential lasagne – and animated superbly.

Naturally Garfield's favourite pastimes are eating and sleeping; he gets hungry from time to time – well, all the time – and to keep track there are two status bars showing how tired he is and how hungry. Should either run out the game is over (Garfield is not allowed to die by order of the licence holders). If hungry enough, he will eat anything he is holding – making a light snack of the table lamp for instance – and unfortunately this may prove to be an object vital to solving a puzzle.

The puzzle solving has the same air about it as Mastertronic's *Magic Knight* trilogy, only without the windows, and revolves round making use of a series of objects scattered throughout the flip-screen maze. Some of the puzzles are rather obscure, odd connections are made from disparate objects, which can be confusing.

What makes *Garfield* special is the humour writ large in Garfield's expressions and in details such as the way he kicks Odie around and smashes up the furniture. The graphics and the nature of the game capture the original cartoon very well, and in this lies its main appeal, but under its high level of presentation, *Garfield* hides a relatively simple collect and drop game which is playable but perhaps not of long lasting appeal.



Garfield eyes the goodies on the table while Jon and Odie do what they do best . . . not a lot – Commodore 64 screen

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

No doubt if you are a Garfield fan, you are going to find the game immense fun to play, and on the Commodore the colourful images make it a delight. Little has been spared in presentation – the appearance of Odie is marked by a ridiculous fanfare as he bounces madly around the screen, and in general the music is high quality and of a suitably jolly nature. Garfield, **due to its linear puzzle-solving nature, isn't going to appeal to everyone, but it captures the characters' essence and makes an entertaining, if limited, game.**

OVERALL 79%

VERSION UPDATE

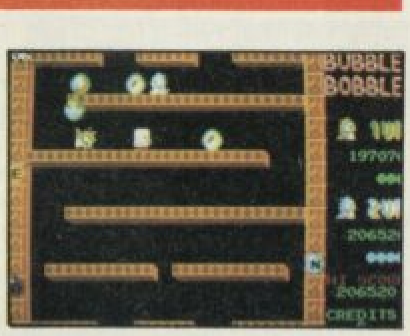
Bearing the brunt of soreness

BUBBLE BOBBLE

Firebird

Atari ST £19.95
Spectrum £7.95 Cassette

REVIEWED on the Commodore 64 in THE GAMES MACHINE Issue One to the tune of 93%, **Software Creations** continue their conversions of the hit arcade coin-op with the release of the ST and Spectrum games. *Bubble Bobble* is one of those games which uses basic graphics and a simplistic idea, but yet contains an unsurpassable amount of addictiveness mixed with immense playability.



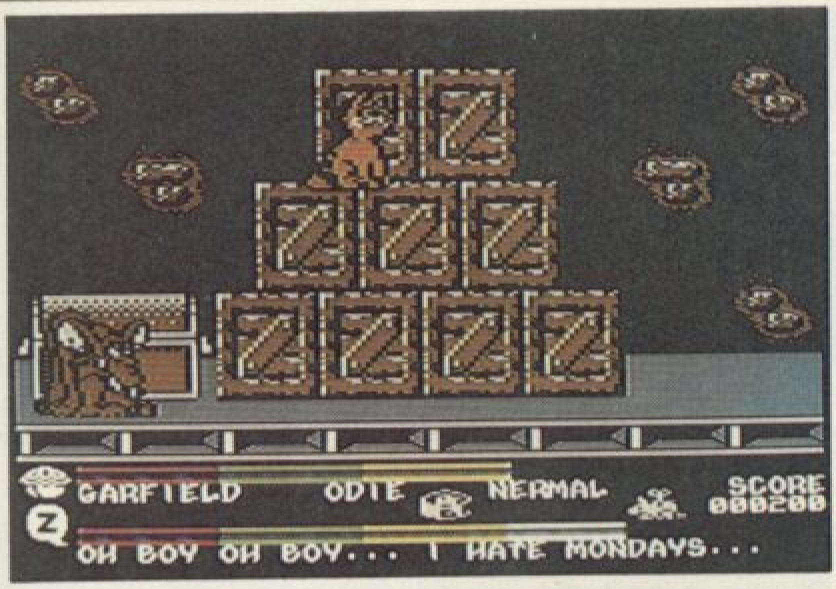
Blow me it's a Brontosaurus

Bub and Bob, two bubble-blowing brontosaurs, bounce around platforms through 100 screens, trapping nasty cave dwellers inside bubbles which they burst to kill them, whilst collecting fruit and special objects in a quest to rescue their brontosauri girlfriends. Packed to the brim with entertainment, *Bubble Bobble* is a classic just-one-more-go game with its irresistable appeal and extremely cute characters.

COMMENT

Bubble Bobble **is fantastically playable and this is graphically better than the coin-op arcade game itself! The only comparative criticism that can be levelled against it concerns the music, it's very much the basic, tinny ST sound, although it's a remarkably faithful rendition playing away merrily throughout. ST** Bubble Bobble **is amazingly close to the arcade original, everything from the introductory screen to the extended jingle is there, and the two player Bub/Bob partnership captures all the fun of the cute coin-op. Cliché or not,** Bubble Bobble **is easily one the best coin-op conversion on the ST so far.**

ATARI ST
OVERALL 94%



Down in the basement – beware the rat

AMIGA/ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.99

No work has started on 16-bit versions, but The Edge are aiming to have games finished in the Spring. The more powerful machines should allow great scope for programmers with the graphics and music, but bearing in mind the typical market represented by current Amiga and ST owners, The Edge might do well to aim for more complex and interlinked puzzles, and give the game a more adult feel.

SPECTRUM 48/ 128

Cassette: £8.99

THE GAMES MACHINE has seen a near-finished copy, and it looks to be just as enjoyable as the Commodore version. Actually the style of game is far more suited to the Spectrum market. The graphics, though monochromatic, are more detailed and cutesy than the Commodore's. Spectrum Garfield should be on sale now.

" . . . under its high level of presentation, Garfield hides a simple game . . . "

COMMENT

Firebird could hardly fail – Bubble Bobble is probably one of the easiest coin-ops to convert to the Spectrum with its definite platform shapes and restricted use of colour, and is ideally suited to the machine's capabilities. The limited colour scheme does make some screens look rather dull, but the majority are pleasing to the eye and professionally put together, keeping attribute clash to a minimum. Bub and Bob and the cave creatures have lost very little of their detail in the transition, and the overall effect works very well indeed. On the 128 the arcade tune plays continuously, suiting the game perfectly. One of the better coin-op conversions for the Spectrum.

SPECTRUM 48/128
OVERALL 88%

Bub and Bob on the ST job



INTERNATIONAL RESCUE

TERRAMEX
Grand Slam

When he finished making *The Devils*, film director Ken Russell turned to *The Boyfriend* – a light-hearted musical set in the Twenties. His reason for the change was that the gruesome horror of *The Devils* had upset him so much. A similar reason has been given by the designers of *Terramex*, who having finished *Death Wish III*, wanted to do something of gentle fun. They are **Pete (Monty Mole) Harrap** and **Shaun Hollingworth** – for several years associated with Gremlin Graphics, but now part of **Teque Software Development**.

Doctor Albert Eyestrain, of renowned eccentricity, has predicted that a large and rather solid asteroid is on a collision course with Earth – and it seems he is right. An international band of five intrepid explorers are meeting to stop this calamity. The five all agree that if one explorer can locate Doctor Eyestrain, maybe he can save Earth. But the odd doc is a recluse, hidden in a secret laboratory in the wilderness.

One of the explorers (chosen at the beginning of the game) needs to scour the wilderness, collecting all sorts of objects ranging from umbrellas and unicycles to vacuum cleaners and even a party manifesto (!). All these serve some purpose in the game, but there are some red herrings around too. So the first task really is to look for whatever there is and find out just what it does for your mission.

The wilderness is a vicious place, infested with venomous rock snakes that leap out at you, acid rain clouds and the Terramex of the title (strange Pteradactyl-like creatures). Running into any means losing the explorer one of three lives. Sheer drops also lie in wait for careless explorers to fall down (although a certain object – no prizes for guessing which – does help by softening the landing).

Mr Wu-Pong nips down the ladder into the caverns in search of further objects needed to save the world – Atari ST screen



MEAN TRICKS

Objects collected are carried by bearers (more cause for Mel Croucher in his battle against racial discrimination . . .), pygmies who appear in the status display carrying the objects collected. As the game progresses, hazards and obstacles are overcome by using the correct object – the flute charms some snakes, but what about the Acme suit case?

A lot of the evident humour in the game is familiar in strain as being pure Pete Harrap, and *Terramex* is full of the mean tricks which characterised the Monty Mole series. For instance, there is a Think option for those awkward moments when the explorer is nonplussed, but it isn't always right! The five explorers are slightly different in behaviour, some refuse to do a particularly dangerous task, standing firm and shaking their head. But try persevering.

Eventually reaching the Doc's secret laboratory, where he paces up and down, checking dials and twiddling knobs, a Positronic Asteroid Deflector (PAD for short) must be constructed. Doc Eyestrain requires several items including cups of tea, a battery and your average atomic pile. Collect the items in the correct order and the PAD slowly takes shape. Once complete, it is up to you to use your pinball skills and deflect the asteroid away towards some other hapless planet.

LOST HUMOUR

Even if on completed, there are still four more routes to take, as each explorer needs different methods and different objects to pass obstacles and achieve goals. The Frenchman Henri Beaucoup has to use a unicycle at one point whilst the German, Herr Wolfgang Schmuck, has to engage in bier drinking competitions. The arcade adventure has been played to death over the past few years but *Terramex* brings back the long-lost humour (last seen in *Jet Set Willy*).

Across the various formats and reviewers, we have to report, there have been serious disagreements as to the game's merits, and it is only fair to add here, that the ratings given must inevitably reflect personal prejudices for or against the notion of a platform-style arcade adventure. *Terramex* is intended to be fun, it is very much of a cartoon nature, with humorous graphics and some neat effects (try loading the cannon with too much gunpowder). Trying to conquer puzzles that pop up and finding out what objects do is an adventure in itself. Most are relatively straightforward but some are positively obscure. It is hard to avoid invidious comparison, but for players who enjoy the Monty Mole/Jet Set Willy game notion with some fiendish puzzles, *Terramex* should prove highly popular.

Edgar J sucking up to the clouds in an attempt find the umbrella that will get him down again . . . sounds like helping the Prof divert the asteroid from Earth's path is going to be a barrel of laughs – Commodore 64 screen



SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £8.95

The Spectrum is Harrap's and Hollingworth's main medium, and as a result Terramex **works extremely well, albeit without the colourful appearance of the ST version. The drawback of a multi-load for the five characters is diminished since it doesn't affect the actual game, unless you want to re-play or change character. In many respects,** Terramex **is ideally suited to the Spectrum and its only real detraction is that the machine has seen many similar games in the past, but this one is very involving and playable.**

OVERALL 84%

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

It sometimes seems hard to credit that there are games which suit one machine better than another, but it's true, and Terramex **does not suit the Commodore. Some of the puzzles are intractably difficult to the point of frustration. The graphics, while attractive enough, are not particularly outstanding. By and large** Terramex **is a very run-of-the-mill platforms-meanie-dodging-collecting-puzzle game, whose originality lies only in the deviousness of some of its conundrums.**

OVERALL 65%

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.95

The ST has been starved of the platforms and ladders style games – whether that's good or not is debatable – If you can put up with the unoriginality of it all, you should find the ST version is playable, funny, has great colourful graphics and a suitably quirky tune running throughout. It is a thoroughly good romp in general.

OVERALL 80%

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £13.95

Sitting somewhere between the ST and Spectrum versions, the Amstrad's graphics are well detailed and colourful. Playability is high if you are partial to the sort of game it represents and there's the advantage of a reasonable tune.

OVERALL 81%

OTHER FORMATS

We haven't seen the version yet, but Terramex **is also due for release on the MSX system, price £8.95.**

" . . . for players who enjoy the Monty Mole/Jet Set Willy game, Terramex **should prove highly popular."**

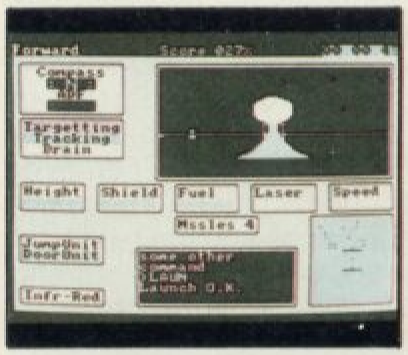
VERSION UPDATE

House of learning

ACADEMY
CRL

Atari ST and PC £19.99

TAU CETI was a big Spectrum hit for Pete Cooke, as was the sequel, *Academy*. Both games found their way onto most popular formats, with *Tau Ceti* recently released on PC and Atari ST. Now *Academy*, too, hits the 16-bit market.



Given the colour differences, the PC version's graphics look very similar to the ST's

The Academy is a training ground for star pilots of the future presented in filled-in 3-D vector graphics. To graduate successfully, each star pilot has to attempt 20 increasingly difficult missions designed to test their combat and flying skills to the limit. Missions range from straightforward alien blasting to halting a nuclear reactor meltdown (shades of *Tau Ceti*). If pilots desire, their skimmer ship specifications can be redefined, the craft's armament, shields, engine rating, defence systems can be altered and even the main display rearranged to suit the pilot's tastes.

The ST Academy shows little improvement graphically over the Amstrad version, and compares badly with the Spectrum original



COMMENT

Great things were expected of this conversion, but surprisingly, the graphics, sound and general gameplay have not been upgraded. The front-end, with its attractive graphics and excellent use of the mouse, gives a deceptive idea of the game itself. The design-a-ship feature is a particularly neat effect, allowing endless skimmer combinations. The bad news is that graphically and sonically there has been little improvement over 8-bit versions. Use of colour is limited, as a result the screen looks rather bland. Excellent use has been made of the ST's faster processor and the game now plays at a ferocious speed, combat with robotic defences is swift and deadly. The lack of any major improvements or extra features in this conversions is a great shame considering its ST potential.

ATARI ST
OVERALL 61%

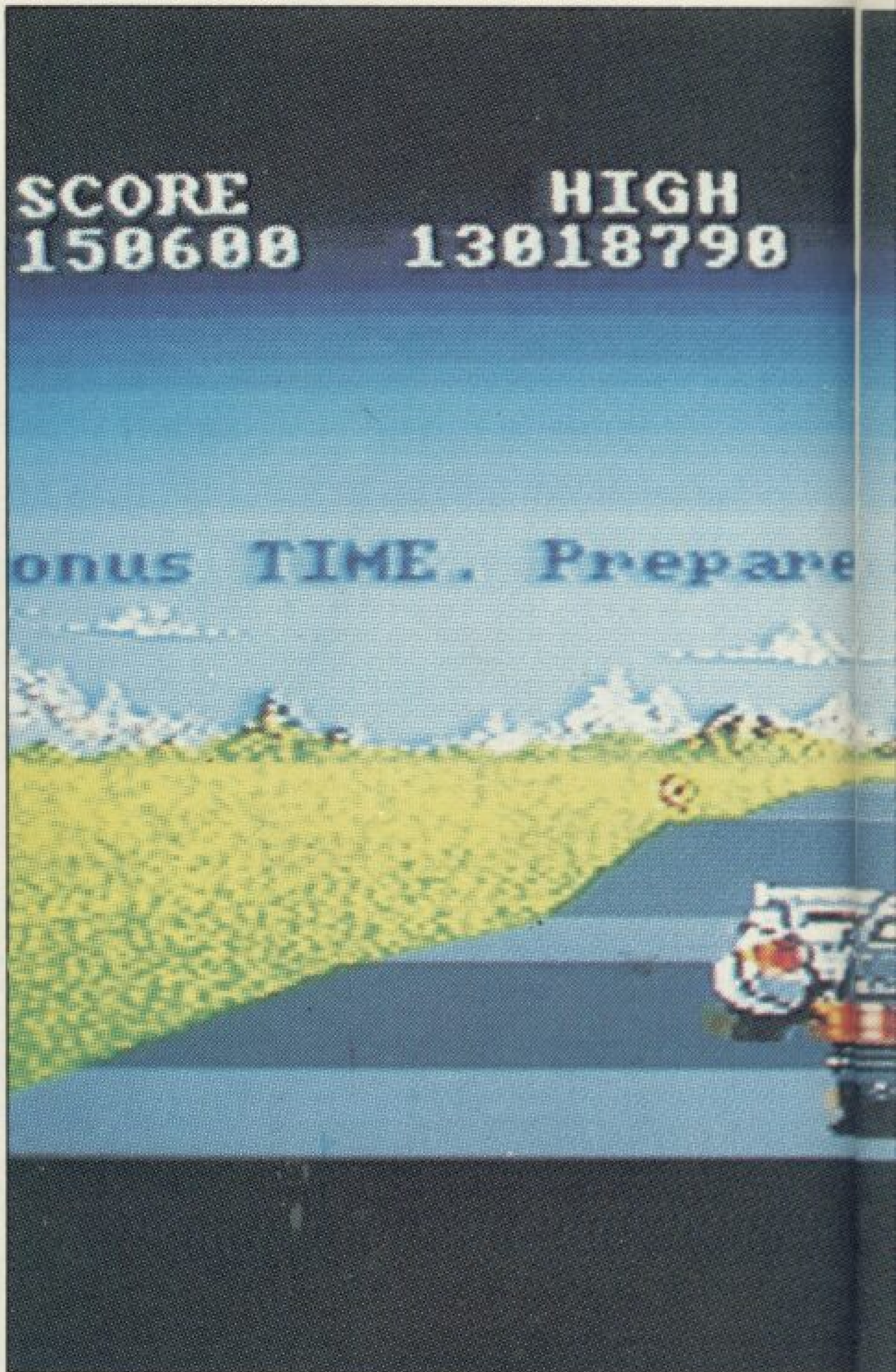
COMMENT

Something of a disappointment on the PC too, as yet again, little has been added to the game. The graphics keep to the PC's standard colour scheme which means the game looks unimpressive, although the shadowing effect of buildings at dusk and dawn works better on this version than on most other formats. Speed is well up with the ST, the game belts along at quite a rate, the screen update and enemy movement working effectively and realistically. Due to the limited colours and simple sound capabilities of the PC, expectations were lower for this conversion, so in that respect it has worked reasonably well.

PC
OVERALL 67%

ROAD ROARS

CRAZY CARS
Titus



We know little about **Titus** beyond the fact that they are a French software house from Montfermeil. But their first product to be reviewed in THE GAMES MACHINE deals with what is becoming a genre of its own – automobile wish-fulfillment. These are the familiar words: have you ever wanted to drive a Ferrari or a Lamborghini, but find that around £50,000 is a bit out of your price range? Fear not, Titus brings you the next best thing; four cars, rising in power and performance, starting with a Mercedes Benz, followed by a Porsche, a Lamborghini and finally a Ferrari.

The game is split into four sections, one for each car, each section consisting of six challenge races, namely Florida, New York, Space Shuttle, Mountain, Arizona and Malibu.

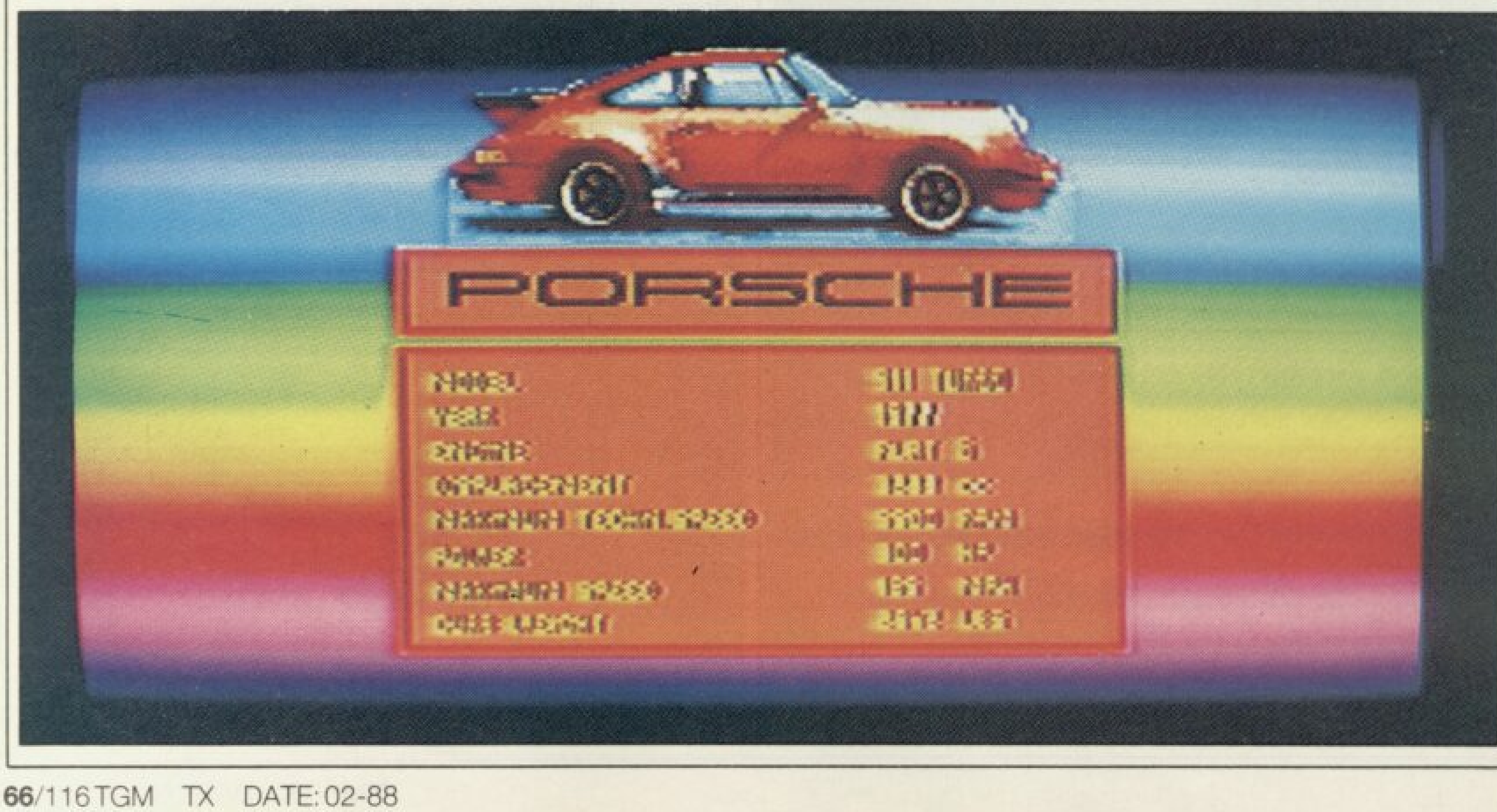
As you progress through each car, the section starts with a picture of the vehicle perched above a list of its technical data, especially shown for the budding mechanics among you. A click of the joystick fire button informs you of the challenge track to be raced upon, and another click puts you onto the starting line.

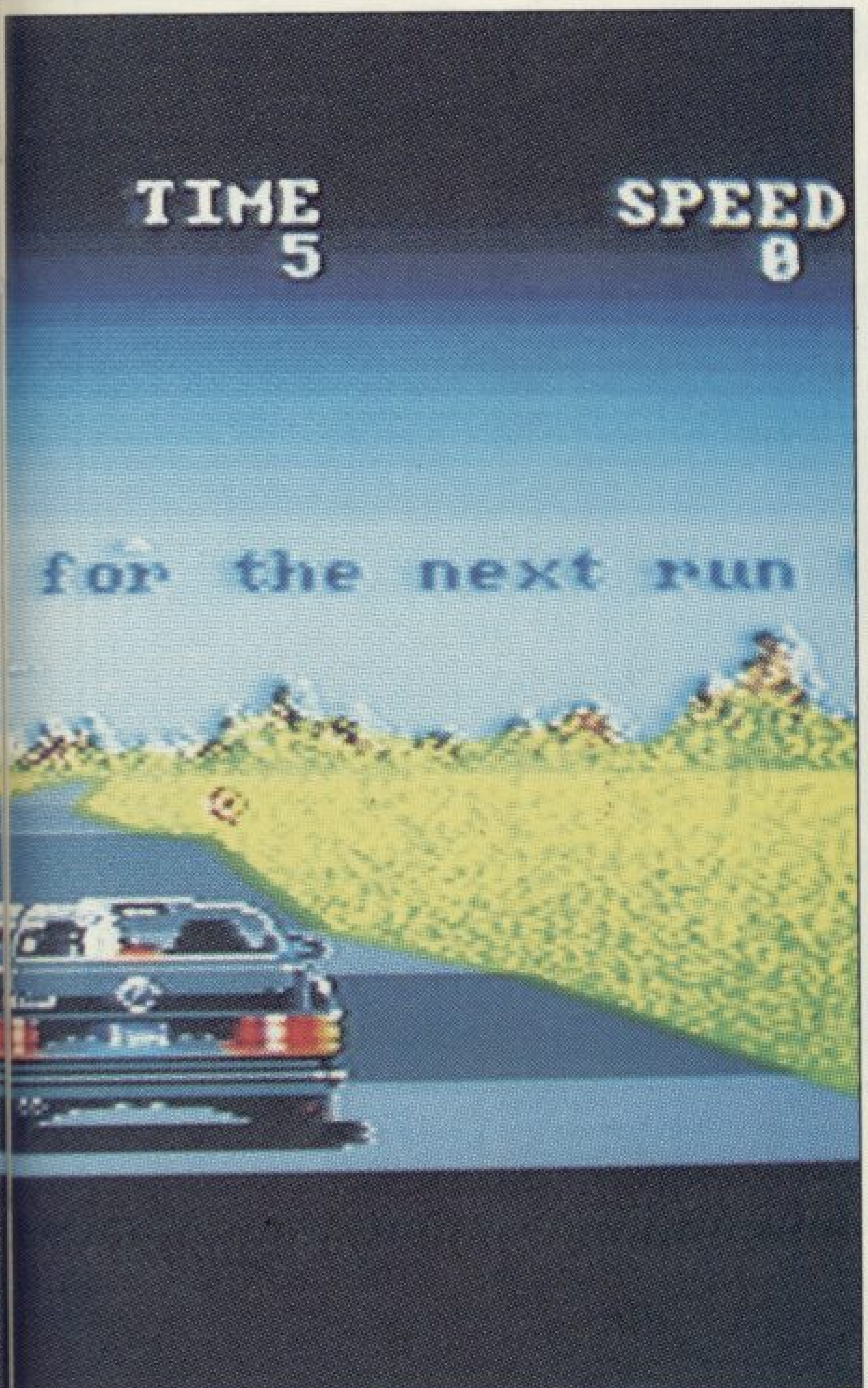
As with most race games your enemy is time; 75 seconds is allowed for the Mercedes and, needless to say, the time limit decreases for each successive car. Conversely each new car is also much faster than the last, 257 kilometers per hour is the top speed of the Mercedes (we did say 'performance cars'), and every erg of power is needed to complete a course. But be warned, at increased speed road handling becomes progressively more difficult.

TRICKY STEERING

Playing *Crazy Cars* inevitably

Trade in your Merc for the level two car – none other than a Porsche 911 Turbo (see competition on page 109)





Your Mercedes tries to overtake the sluggish Lamborghini – Amiga screen

brings to mind the arcade *Out Run*, although it is less expansive. But great fun is to be had zooming around in cars that most of us will never be able to own. *Crazy Cars*, like *Out Run*, has hill effects, but they are far more exaggerated and graphically amusing – more effective too. The only real letdown of the game is the control, which is tricky; there is no diagonal movement, so it becomes near-impossible to steer round corners and accelerate at the same time. The fun elements, combined with unusually bright and oddly designed courses, makes *Crazy Cars* a decently addictive and entertaining game of modest pretension.

Part of the fun comes from the other road users, for you are not alone on the track; other contestants are doing their best to bump, jostle and be generally obnoxious, causing much gnashing of teeth and loss of valuable time. Once a course is completed within the time limit, the game continues onto the next course, and so on, until all six are completed. Only then is the car upgraded to the next model, and the process starts over again. Will you be lucky enough to drive the Ferrari?

AMIGA

Diskette: £24.95

The Amiga graphics are very nice with large, well defined cars whizzing around a solid looking racetrack, while the sound is also good, going from a twangy guitar solo on the intro screen, to quite realistic engine roars and tyre squeals in the actual game. Of special note must be the Game Over screen, a French Impressionist painting of the famous Chicago car graveyard with the cars nose down in the grass, set among trees while a bird-song effect plays.

OVERALL 78%

OTHER FORMATS

Crazy Cars **is also being released for the Atari ST, PC at £19.95 and Amstrad CPC (£9.95 cassette, £14.95 diskette) by the end of January, and Spectrum (cassette £9.95) during February. Version updates when we get them.**

" . . . unusually bright and oddly designed courses, make Crazy Cars **a decently addictive game."**

VERSION UPDATE

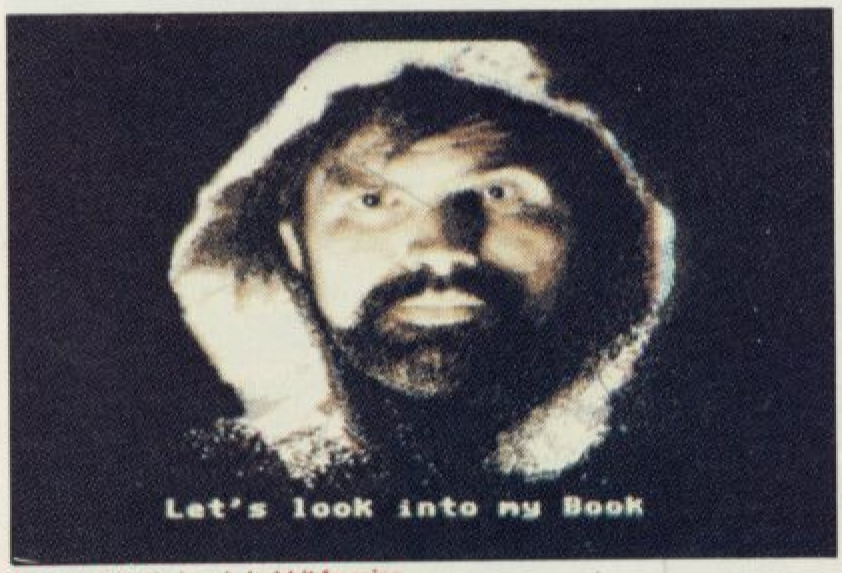
Martial arts for martial arts sake

MOEBIUS
MicroProse

Amiga, Atari ST £24.95

ORIGIN SYSTEMS INC, publishers of fantasy role play software such as the *Ultima* series and *Ogre*, now release the 16-bit *Moebius* for Atari ST and Amiga.

To retrieve the Celestial Orb Of Harmony, stolen from Moebius. courage, cunning, ingenuity (and an almost ruthless devotion to the Pope) and some knowledge of an intricate magic system are required to make any progress whatsoever in the game. Four differing planes, (fire, wind, air and water) each with their own obstacles and variables, need to be completed before the final confrontation is reached and the Orb successfully returned to its rightful owner. Before the chosen one embarks on the quest, sufficient mastery of barehand and sword fighting and mental self-control must be mastered. No game advancement may be made until the player is thoroughly competent in these skills.



Moebius *is obviously habbit forming*

COMMENT

The look and feel of Moebius **on the Amiga and ST is very similar. Although graphics, animation and sound are considerably enhanced compared to the Commodore 64 version, sadly the gameplay is still the same. The training sequences are slow and tedious, most adversaries are dealt with using only one or two repeated moves. The game is large but, again, lacks the grab factor which should encourage the player to enjoy** Moebius **and strive to get somewhere within it. Nice to look at but naff to play.**

AMIGA/ATARI ST OVERALL 53%

VERSION UPDATE

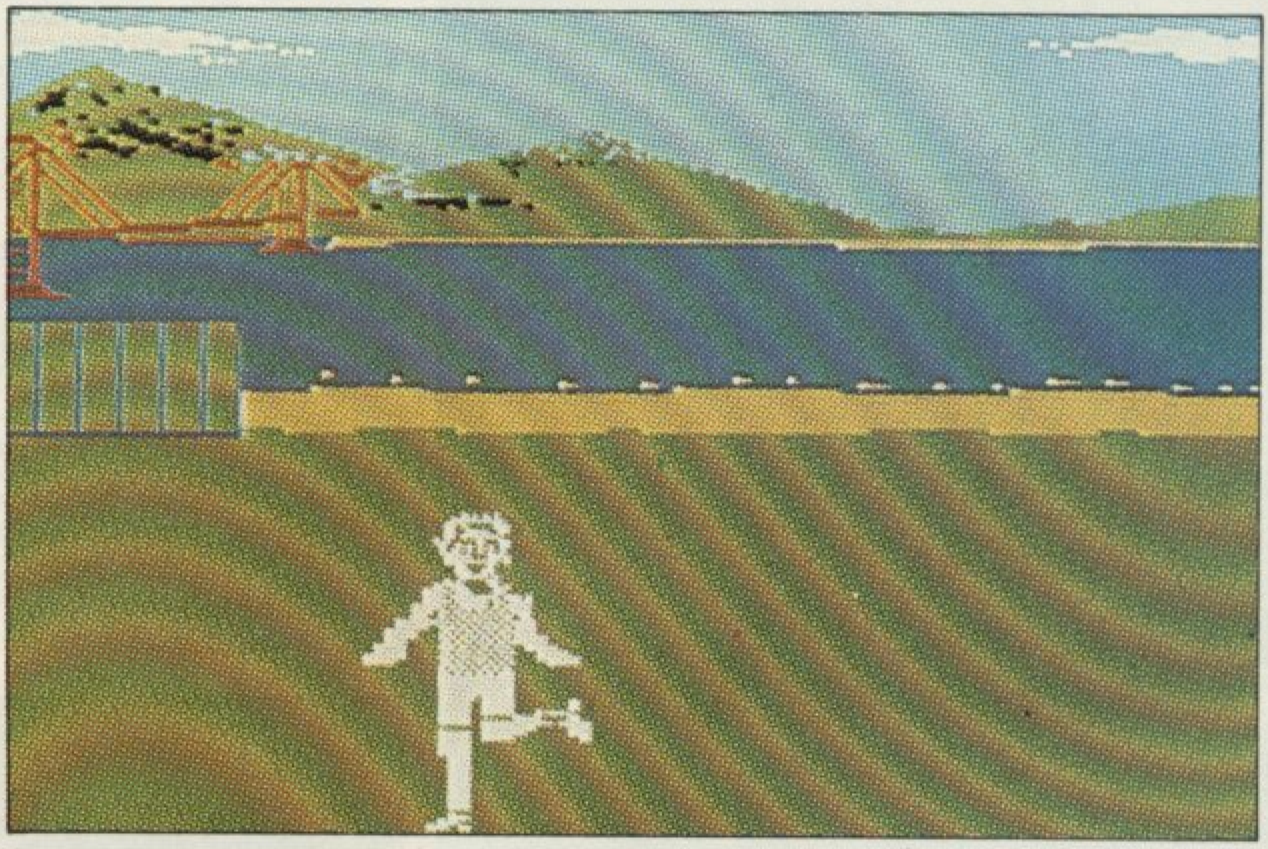
Summer Charleston

CALIFORNIA GAMES
US Gold/Epyx

Spectrum £8.99

REVIEWED in the first issue of THE GAMES MACHINE, *California Games* was rated at 92% on the Commodore 64, and considered as one of the most impressive events games to date. We have no news of the Amstrad version, and those for Amiga and MSX owners, slated for October 1987, still have not materialised. The Spectrum version, however, has. The game consists of six events: Half Pipe Skateboarding, Foot Bag, Surfing, Roller Skating, BMX Bike Racing and Frisbee.

Looks a bit like a Charleston dance demonstration . . .



COMMENT

With the possible exception of Winter Games, **Epyx Spectrum conversions have in the main been pretty. The graphics in** California Games **are monochromatic, poorly animated and with little or no attention to detail, while the sound is limited to unimpressive spot FX. This does not bode well for the rest of the game, which uses a multi-load system for each of the events. This can be tedious, but borne with if the game is compelling. Unfortunately the events themselves are boring to play and not a patch on the Commodore. A very disappointing conversion of a-once excellent game.**

SPECTRUM 48/128
OVERALL 45%

VERSION UPDATE

Recycle

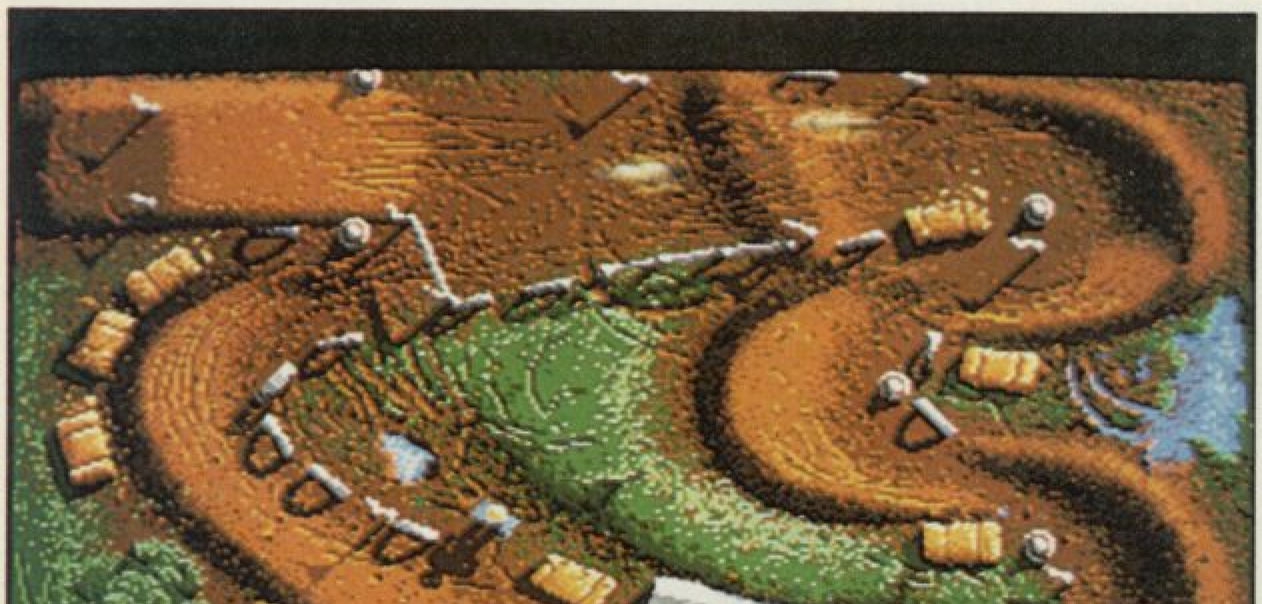
BMX SIMULATOR
Code Masters

Amiga £14.99

IT HAS taken its time arriving on the Amiga, having first appeared on the Commodore in November 1986 (ZZAP! 64 gave it 83%), and in fact the Amiga game is really only an upgraded version, as the gameplay remains the same.

Selection of the options available is made on the title screen, consisting of keys (which are displayed at left and right hand of the screen), joystick and a choice of competing against a friend or computer rider. The view is from overhead. At the beginning of each track you are placed on the starting grid. The computer then sounds three high-pitched notes, displays: 'Riders ready, pedals ready, go!' Then it is all up to you to beat your opponent in the frantic race against time.

Code Masters first 16-bit product is pretty but essentially the same 8-bit game



COMMENT

Graphically, the Amiga BMX Simulator **is superb. Every jump, barrel, flag etc is excellently detailed. Sound is improved over the 64 on the title screen, but is scarce on the racing. Colour is well implemented throughout even though fairly dark colours are used for the tracks themselves. Movement of the riders is continually smooth throughout the whole game. If you complete a track in the allotted time, you have the option to see how well you have (or haven't) managed to overcome those obstacles by pressing the A key when prompted. In this mode, if you hold down the S key, the action replay goes into slow motion. When the track is completed it's on to the next, except this time the going is a little bit harder.**

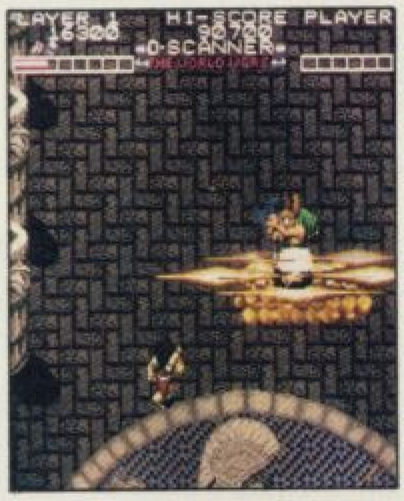
AMIGA
OVERALL 76%%

COIN-OP CONFRONTATION

Setting out at dawn, fearless GAMES MACHINE coin-op commandos ventured deep into occupied Manchester on a do-or-die mission to bring back vital data on the latest arcade scene. Robin Hogg wielded the joystick and Cameron Pound took the pictures. Thanks to Avril at SunSpot for the use of the machines.

A Time Soldier razes guard towers with rockets in the Modern Age





Time Soldier: a Roman god, one of the larger baddies, goes up in smoke

TIME SOLDIERS

Producers: SNK

TRAVEL BACK and forth through time wreaking havoc in the new release *Time Soldiers*. The evil being Glyned has trapped comrades of the Time Soldiers and they need rescuing pronto; not the easiest of tasks considering they are scattered throughout different time-zones, with each zone guarded by an army of soldier-warriors.

One or two players can take the role of the Time Soldiers as they battle their way through the landscape of each zone, fighting cavemen in a prehistoric age, blasting at centurions in the Roman era and subduing many enemies through time right up to the present day with its tanks, helicopters and flamethrowing infantry.

Occasionally, a red warrior – appropriate to the time period – comes on screen, if you shoot him extra weapons, such as lasers, mega-lasers (double the width and double the firepower!), ripple-fire guns, rockets and more are awarded. The weapons are only effective for a limited time so before they run out of power it is a good idea to destroy as many of the enemy as possible.

Progress through a zone causes further, larger foes to appear, that require several hits before exploding. These prove tough opponents, but they're chicken feed compared with the Mega-Baddy waiting at the end of each zone – these can be anything from an immense fire-spitting dinosaur to a massive rocket-launching tank literally taking up half of the screen! Survive long enough to destroy this and the captured comrade is released, and entering a futuristic time travel machine takes you on to the next time-zone and even greater hazards.

Time Soldiers bears more than a passing resemblance to *Ikari Warriors* in its style and general gameplay, but that's where the similarities end. The high quality graphics are rich in detail, varied and interesting, atmospheric and suit each zone perfectly. In fact it's extremely difficult to find fault in the graphics and general appearance. Right from the start the game is playable, with a progressive difficulty which makes later levels very tough going indeed (thankfully a continue-play option is included). Unlike *Ikari Warriors*, it is not immensely difficult in one-player mode and is a challenge for novices and experts alike. Of all the games in this genre (and to a certain extent this includes *Gauntlet*) this is the most playable and enjoyable to date. *Ikari Warriors* fans will fall for this hook, line and sinker!

Time Soldier: fighting through the Roman Age – note the beautifully detailed floor graphics



XYBOTS

Producers: Atari

AN ALTERNATIVE title for *Xybots* would be 'A Vastly Reworked Bezerk Meets Gauntlet In 3-D' which is probably the best possible description for this new two-player game.

An alien race, the Xybots no less, have invaded, and constructed an immense multi-level fortress patrolled by deadly laser-bolt-firing robots. Only Major Rock Hardy and Captain Ace Gunn are macho enough to enter the fortress, fight through to the lower levels and exterminate the Master Xybots themselves. The players run down the 3-D corridors and

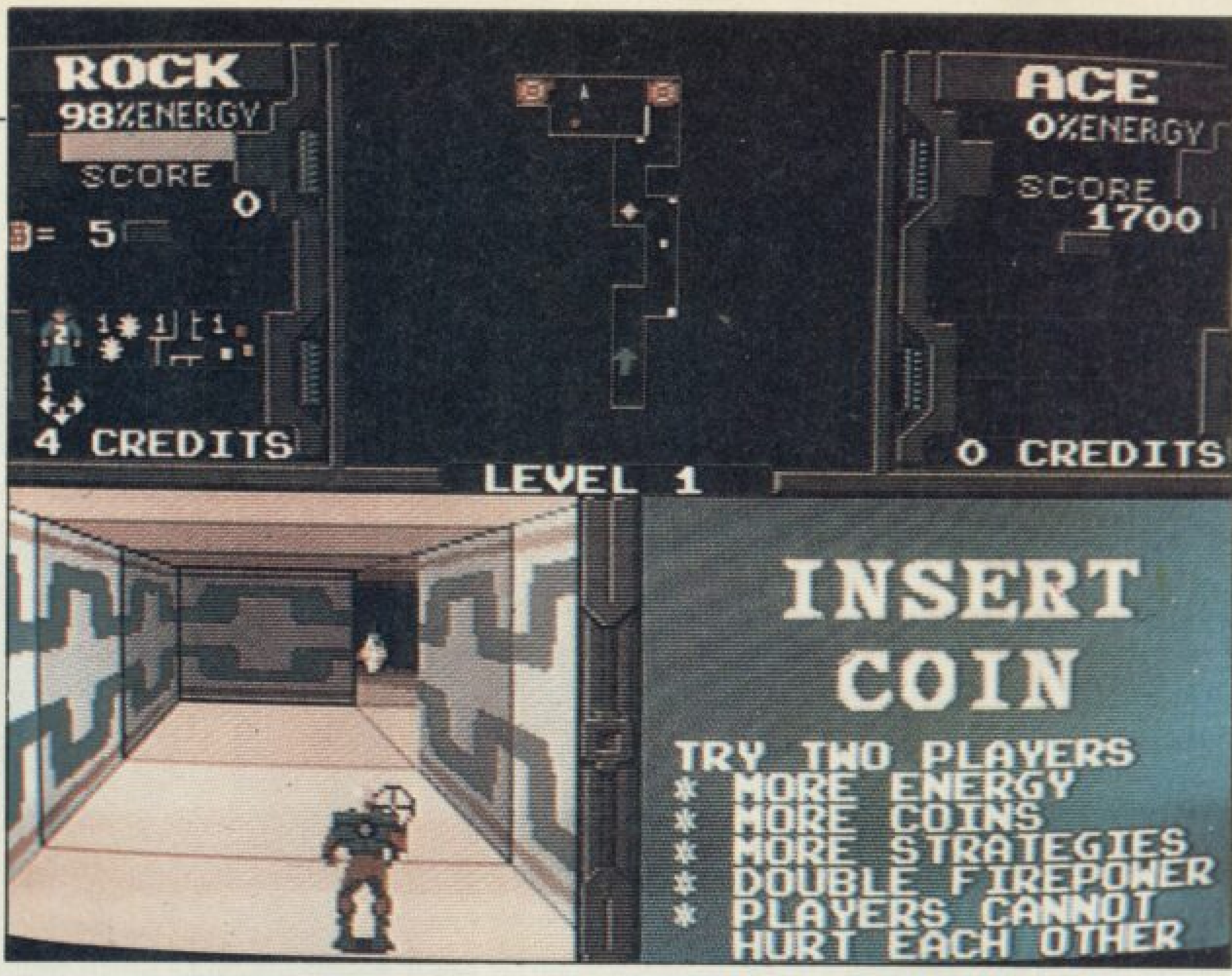
PRESS ANY KEY

passageways, rotating the joystick to face other directions and using a hand-held laser to dispose of attacking droids. Pressing the stun button halts the robots momentarily but costs ten percent of the player's energy – energy capsules, found lying around, restore the ebbing life-force. To reach the next level, a lift platform is provided for transportation, stopping off at a supply centre where extra armour, speed, strength and firepower can be bought in readiness for the battle to come.

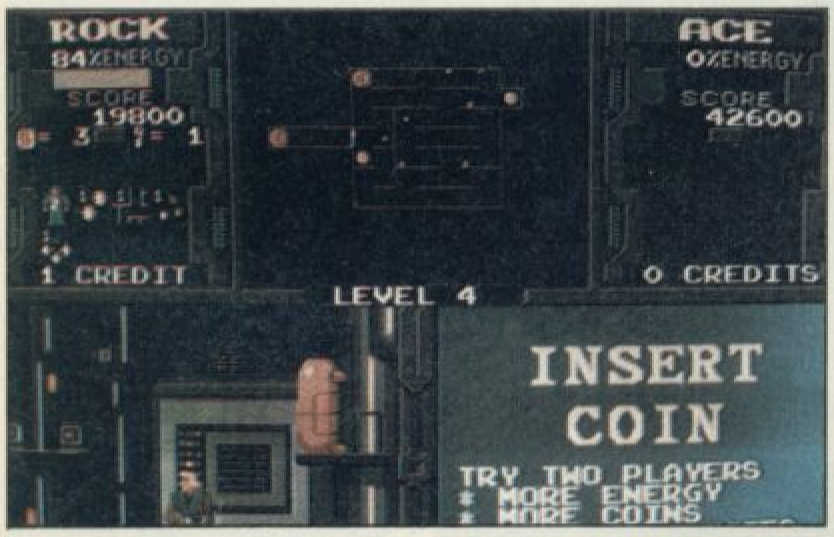
Simply running down a corridor towards a distant, shadowy junction brings out the incredible atmosphere of the game. The excellent shading and colours used combined with the frantic pace of the action, add enormously to the game's superlative play and high quality. Mysterious passageways invite players to explore further, not quite knowing what lies in the darkness ahead.

The twin-player/partnership facility of *Xybots* works so much better than the four-player chaos that often occurs in games like *Gauntlet*. More emphasis is placed on strategies and teamwork, which adds a new dimension, and two players working in unison make for a deadly force.

The game's addictive qualities are immediately obvious and the temptation to play on and on is impossible to resist. *Xybots* is immensely playable, highly addictive, and most important of all, it is thoroughly enjoyable.



Who knows what lurks round that corner? The Xybots dare you to look!



Arriving at the ground floor supply centre for extra Xybot-smashing equipment

Entering the fortress of the Xybots – too late to turn back now!

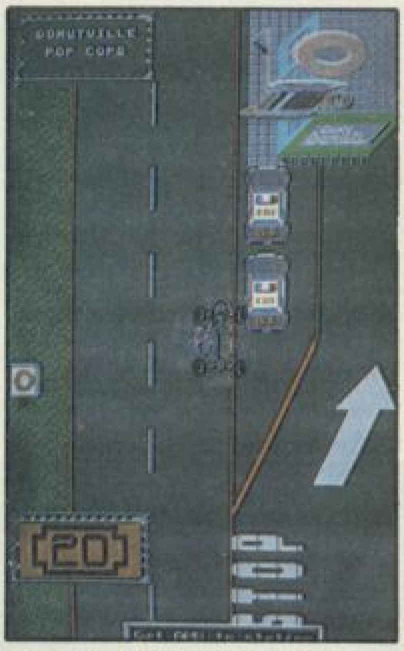


A.P.B.
Producers: Atari

ENTER THE crazy and wacky world of the American Police (the world of *Police Academy* perhaps?) in Atari's cop coin-op *A.P.B. (All Points Bulletin)*. All manner of criminals are out on the streets and it takes an expert cop to round them up.

To fill his quota, the player needs to patrol the avenues and freeways chasing speedsters, litterbugs, road hogs and other ne'er do wells in a vain attempt to enforce the law – even the litterbugs can be pains in the butt! Sirens will do for most of the offenders but some downright stubborn criminals require a rear-end shunt before they give themselves up. Crashing your car, or colliding with another vehicle, results in demerits – too many of these and it's resignation time.

A policeman's lot is a hungry one so stopping off for doughnuts

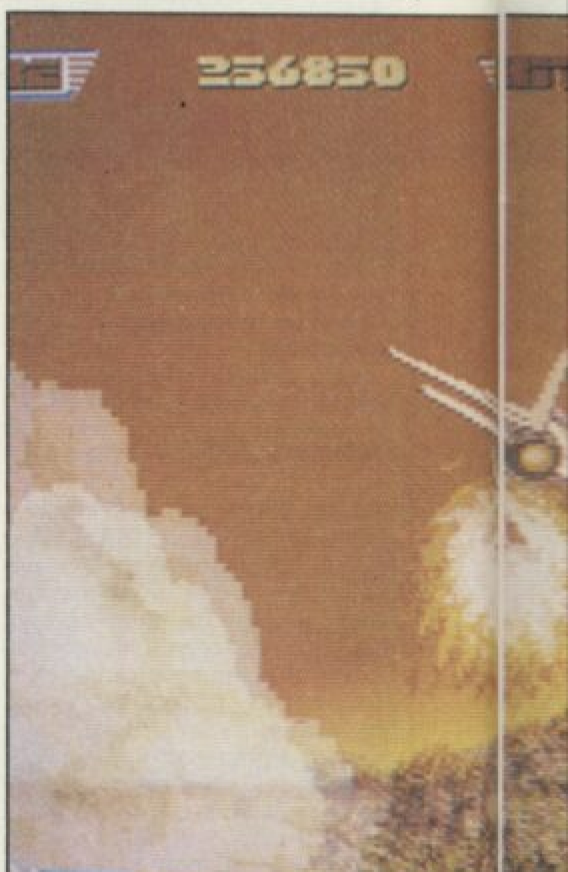


Stopping off for one of Don's Donuts (sic), you wallop a vehicle, and that's another demerit for A.P.B.

boosts the time allowed on each level. Later levels mean more and more to do in less time with some real tricky characters to apprehend. Fortunately goodies like a turbo accelerator and a set of nifty brakes can be bolted on to give those big-time crooks a run for their money.

What with the plethora of 'serious' shoot-'em- and bash-'em-ups around at the moment, *A.P.B.* is like a breath of fresh air. Totally original as an idea, it is a laugh-a-minute coin-op with some excellent touches which proves you don't have to have fancy graphics and non-stop violence to make for an enjoyable game.





AFTERBURNER
Producers: SEGA

HOTTEST SEGA release so far, *Afterburner*, is an air combat coin-op of awesome proportions. The game objective is simple – take out as many enemy targets as possible whilst flying through a multitude of land- and seascapes. The simplicity of the task is confounded, however, by the sheer speed of it all – *Afterburner*'s action is the fastest and most violent to date. Enemy aircraft, their incoming missiles and ground features flash past at a horrific rate.



Afterburner: stopping off at a friendly airfield for fuel, weapons and . . . what's that 'Hang On' biker doing on the runway?

Use the afterburner, and the opposition become mere blurs. Although the layered graphics are extremely detailed and a joy to behold, they're impossible to appreciate at the speeds they move.

To provide an offensive capability, the fighter is armed with all manner of missiles and a devastating cannon. Landing on friendly runways to rearm is vital if the plane is to survive through the following stages. Refuelling tankers regularly fly overhead to top up thirsty tanks.



Goodness gracious! Great balls of fire! Banking hard right in Afterburner to avoid the inferno of another exploding baddy

Controlling the plane isn't easy at the best of times as it lurches wildly (even performing complete rolls) at the slightest movement. The game's pace makes it look virtually impossible to progress more than 50 feet without losing a life, but in play it all boils down to the rather simplistic process of rapidly banking left and right and firing the guns an awful lot. *Afterburner* will almost certainly repeat the success of *Out Run* due to its fantastic graphics and extremely fast blasting action, but the ridiculously high cost of a game (up to £1 a go) will put many people off.

WARDNER

Recipe: put in base ingredients of cute graphics, mix in a good dose of platforms-and-ladders action, and with some fiendishly addictive gameplay and you have *Wardner*.

Walking through a forest with his girlfriend one day, the hero of the game is most peeved when his beloved is spirited away by a nasty piece of work known as Wardner. To rescue her, he has to enter Wardner's. There's a small matter of dark forests, swamps, lava pits and other hazardous areas littered with platforms and ledges to be navigated first. Inhabitants of these regions include bat creatures, mutants, spinning blades, tanks, witches, wyverns and even stranger and wonderfully detailed creatures intent on ending our hero's rescue attempt once and for all. Thoughtfully, a flamethrower is provided for protection, and it can be upgraded to rapid fire by collecting crystals. Gold chests and other currencies lie around awaiting collection and by an incredible coincidence there's a shop at the end of each level where extra weapons and other goodies can be purchased to aid in the quest. No money? – No purchase!

Some pretty nifty footwork and accurate timing is required to avoid the wandering creatures, shoot back at them and stay on the high-up ledges at the same time. It gets *real* tough on later levels, with some screens being very unfair, crammed full of nasties and sheer drops requiring perfect timing to cross, whilst others prove deceptively simple.

Wardner is infuriatingly addictive, highly playable and a prime example of a just-one-more-go game. It scores no points for originality (very few games do nowadays) but it has brought together the best elements of *Ghosts And Goblins* and other games of the ilk and played on them to great effect.

A happy moment in flashback – the start of Wardner before evil enters the happy couple's life



Down in in Wardner's deep dark woods lurk platforms, sheer drops and all sorts of unpleasant things

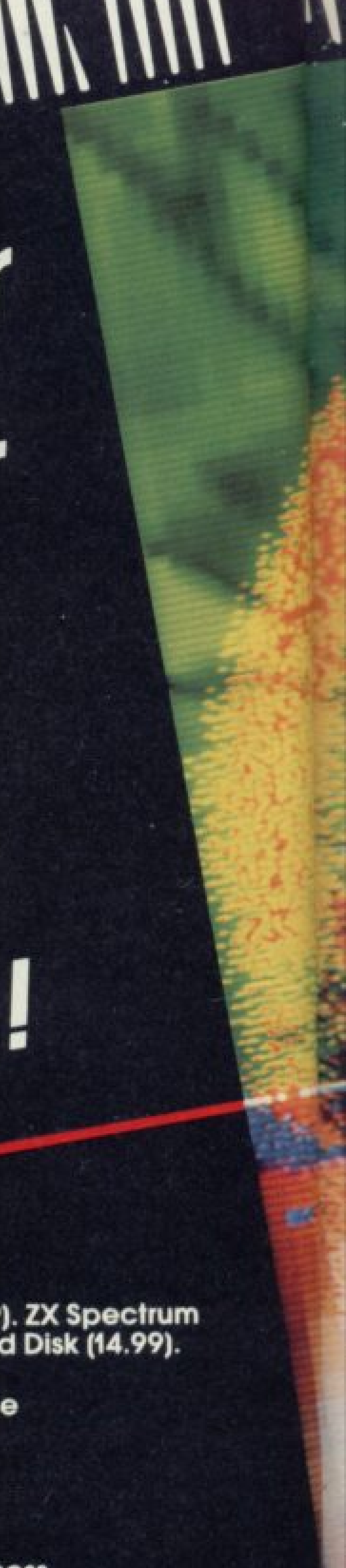


Sixty seconds of shopping time to get some upgraded weapons in Wardner



SOMETHING HORRIFYING AND INEX

SCHWARZENEGGER
PREDAT



Nothing like it has ever been on Earth before. It came for the thrill of the hunt. It picked the wrong person to hunt. YOU!

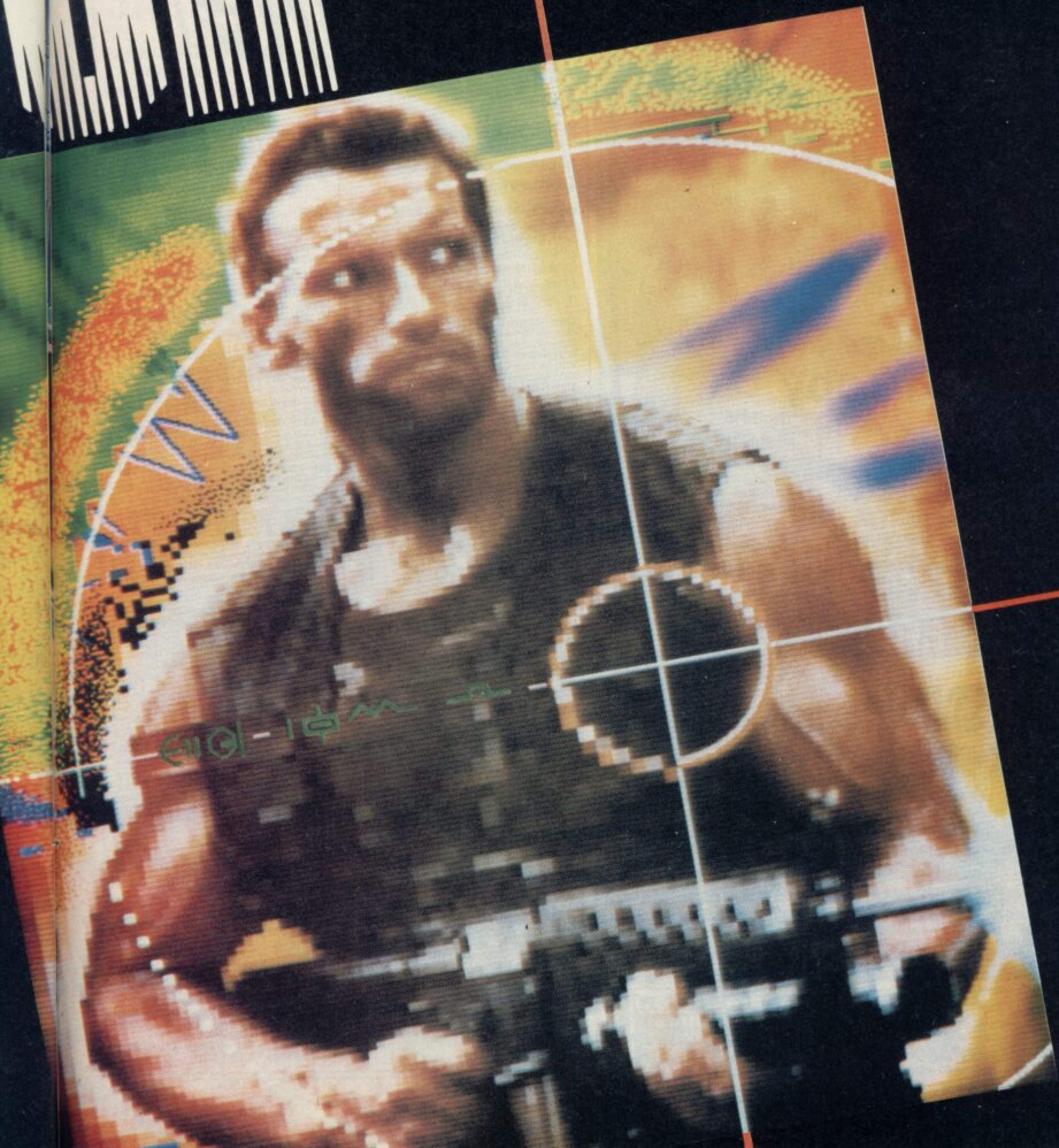
Commodore 64/128 Cassette (£9.99) and Disk (£14.99). ZX Spectrum 48K/128K/+ (£9.99). Amstrad CPC Cassette (£9.99) and Disk (14.99). Atari ST (£14.99).
Mail Order: Activision (UK) Ltd. Units 3 & 4 Lloyds Close
Finedon Road Industrial Estate Wellingborough
Northampton NN8 4SR Tel: (0933) 76768
American Express, Visa and Access Cards welcome

American Express, Visa Access

ACTIVISION

Game concept, design and graphics by System 3.

EXPLICABLE IS GOING TO HAPPEN......



COMPETITION WINNERS

the GAMES machine

From Issue One of THE GAMES MACHINE

Mastertronic's Sega Competition

Jeremy Murphy, Avon BA3 1DW wins the **Sega Master System** with **Light Phaser** and the choice of six games from those released by mid-November, plus a TGM T-Shirt. And the ten runners up, each receiving a TGM T-Shirt are:

Chris Abbott, Beeston, Notts, NG9 2BD; Marcus Turner, Nottingham, NG2 1QQ; Stuart Fraser, Holyhead, Gwynedd, LL65 2HF; Andrew Davis, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 1TF; Mr Hon Cheng, Hertford, Hants, SG14 3AY; Michael Cook, Enfield, Middx, EN1 3AQ; N Brown, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 3HP; John Ruddick, Northumberland, NE42 5JS; S Singh, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 0AT; Neil Glass, London, NW2 3LL.

Mattel UK's Nintendo Competition

Robert Collier from Leominster, Herefordshire wins the **Nintendo Deluxe Set** and six cartridges, and we're throwing in an ubiquitous TGM T-Shirt as well. And then there are a further ten runners up, who each receive a TGM T-Shirt:

M Easton, Westerham, Kent, TN16 1UB; Brian Dick, Bovington, Dorset, BH20 6HY; Mrs PE Robertson, Kingswinford, West Midlands, DY6 8RX; T Patterson, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9JT; Stephen Lee Ottewell, Chaddenden, Derby, DE2 6TE; K E Rippon, Preston, Lancs, PR4 0YD; Jason Brown, Malton, N Yorks, YO17 0NQ; Luke Gietzen, Brenchley Gardens, London, SE23 3QN; Chris Matthews, St.Neots, Cambs, PE19 1UJ; Tim Cutler, Sheffield, S Yorks, S7 1SF.

Infocompetition

Courtesy of **Activision UK**, the full range of superb Infocom adventures was up for grabs, and the winner is **Miss J Hewett** from Upper Norwood, London SE19. A Copy of *Nord And Bert Could Not Make Head Nor Tale Of It* acts as a fine consolation prize for ten runners up, and they are:

Fiona Bissett, London, N14 5PT; JP Shell, Tyne & Wear, NE26 3AS; Peter Chalcraft, W Sussex, BN4 3LN; E Wilson, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2TG; Alexander Kells, Liverpool, L21 1AU; Simon Harrowing, Norfolk, PE31 8ST; Jan Hein de Vroe, Blaricum, The Netherlands; Jason Guest, Leicestershire, LE2 5TD; Robert Pocock, Derbyshire, SK17 9BG; Mark Topping, Bath, BA1 3RL.

Ocean's *Athena* Competition

CJ Finnie from Solihull, W Midlands wins the exciting Ocean-made, custom-built, portable ***Athena* arcade machine**, with leads, Tatung Monitor and a Quickshot IX joystick. 50 runners up get a copy of *Athena* (or *Renegade* if they are Amstrad owners), and they are:

Michael Nicholson, Wirral, L48 5HF; Mahmood Sultan, Worcester, WR4 9PQ; Michael Mitchell, N Humberside, HU6 9TH; Robin Cavill, W Yorks, WF12 7BE; John Parchment, London, E5 0AD; Andrew Holmes, S Humbs, DN32 9QJ; J Bramham, S Yorks, S31 0WG; J Simmonite, Sheffield, S11 8TD; J Temple, Essex, CO3 4PE; S Gulamali, Wilts, SP5 4AT; David MacLauchlan, Somerset, BA22 9LF; Anthony S Burke, Lancs, WN5 9SW; John Prentice, Suffolk, IP14 2HQ; Howard Thorpe, Southampton; Chris Taylor, Co Durham, DH2 2JP; Daniel Owen, Swindon, Wilts; Philip Goodwin, Essex, SS11 7EL; Daniel Henderson, Dublin; C Boyle, London, N22 4YJ; Diarmuid McGowan, Derry, BT48 9JE; Chris Garbutt, Essex, SS13 1RR; H Morthensen, Co Durham; RM Thorpe, Co Durham, SR7 7JD; James Hendrie, London NW1 9AX; Tim Patterson, Birmingham, B17 9JT; Damian Lunny, Co Fermanagh, BT74 6HB; Greg Shea, Kent; Nicholas Henstock, S Yorks, S61 2UJ; Jon Rose, W Sussex, PO21 3JZ; Alan Miller, Carluke, ML8 5DD; K Wolstenholme, Manchester, M3 2NH; Kevin McNamara, Lancs, OL8 4BY; M Ashcroft, Aberdeen, AB2 8BZ; Lewis Cohen, Cambs, PE7 1NP; Jon Dawson, Notts, NG15 6HW; Andrew Surtees, Cleveland, TS27 4EZ; Shane Hassan, Co Derry, BT47 4TR; Mat Brookfield, Essex, SS16 6LH; Richard J Hele, Devon, PL9 7QN; Anthony Goddard, Oxford, OX2 7TE; CM Lee, London, E17 5LX; Clive Peedell, Oxford, OX2 9HQ; Paul Morris, Herts, WD2 1HH; Martin O'Connor, Derbys, S41 9HA; Stephen Flood, Co Down, BT20 3HA; Max Grattie, Cheshire, WA16 9QU; John McNeil, Co Durham, DH3 3SD; Neil Deaville, Staffs, ST14 8QH; Russell Bird, S Yorks, S65 1QL; Mark Thompson, Southampton, SO1 6DN.

Electronic Arts and Chessmaster 2000

Ten winners each receive a copy of the *Chessmaster 2000* program:

SJ Cooper, Clwyd, LL12 8JF; D Orosun, Staffs ST1 3DD; John Watson, Perthshire, PH15 2AT; Paul Brattan, Hull, HU6 9DU; Thomas Kristiansen, 3520 Farum, Denmark; Andrew Hirst, Manchester, M28 5SU; Alistar May, Moray, IV30 1QT; Robert Lines, Hants, PO12 2QW; Carl Kuttelwascher, Surrey, GU15 1EG; Brian Neilson, Lanarks, ML6 8DW.

ROB STEEL'S GETTING ADVENTUROUS

JACK THE RIPPER

CRL
COMMODORE 64/128 Cassette: £9.95 Diskette: £14.95
SPECTRUM 48/128 Cassette: £9.95
AMSTRAD CPC Cassette: £9.95 Diskette: £14.95

Joint authors (you can decide among yourselves in which context you wish to view the word joint!) of *Jack The Ripper*, the latest adventure release from CRL, are none other than the St Brides ladies – or more specifically – **Marianne Scarlett** and **Priscilla Langridge**. These writers' previous claims to fame include *Bugsy, The Secret Of St Brides* and *The Very Big Cave Adventure*, none of which impressed me very much. However, it seems that the ladies have matured somewhat in their approach to the adventure world (even if they do still behave strangely in public) and Jack The Ripper is the first of their games which has actually held my interest for more than 20 minutes.



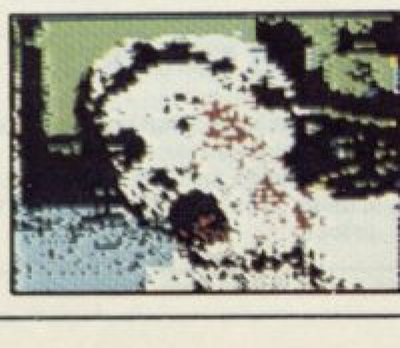
Set in the year 1888, when olde London Towne was in the grip of the evil Ripper, the player is put in the unenviable position of being suspected by the Peelers as having more than a passing interest in the recent horrific murders. They do in fact seem to think the player *is* the Ripper and are intent on both catching him and putting an end to his gruesome vocation.



The adventure begins as you discover the horribly mutilated body of a young woman, examination of which not only produces one of the many tasteless pictures to be found within the game (as Mel Croucher discovered in THE GAMES MACHINE Issue 2, even the St Brides ladies couldn't bear to look at them) but also two scraps of paper and a bloody knife. Taking the weapon is a dumb move so stick with the paper and don't forget to pocket it before leaving the scene of the crime.



Events at the start of the game tend to lead the player through without much interaction but the prose is very readable and quite descriptive. Once control of the hero has been gained there are many problems to solve, mostly in



the form of covering your tracks. The general atmosphere created within *Jack The Ripper* smacks of Rod Pike (adventurous author of *Pilgrim*, *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*) although this is by no means a bad thing and St Brides do it very well.

Putting aside the censorship hype and the less than agreeable topic of the adventure, *Jack The Ripper* is professionally implemented and quite exciting to play, the three parts included also add to the package by making it value for money . . . a must for those of us over 18!

ATMOSPHERE 82%
INTERACTION 73%
OVERALL 78%

JINXTER

Rainbird/Magnetic Scrolls
AMIGA Diskette: £24.95
ATARI ST Diskette: £24.95

Michael Bywater wrote *Jinxter*. He's the gentleman responsible for *Punch* magazine's 'wild invective', so if you are a reader of this mildly amusing mag you will know what style of humour to expect from the game. The award-winning team **Magnetic Scrolls** also had quite a lot to do with the program, you remember them, they're the bods (except for Anita Sinclair who is definitely un-bod-like) who brought us *The Pawn* – winner of twelve international awards – and *Guild Of Thieves* – winner of the British Microcomputing Federation's Game Of The Year award 1987.

The story opens with the player on the local bus on his way home. What could be more innocent? The only worrying thoughts on the player's mind at present concern the general level of good fortune within his country which has been

decreasing rapidly of late.

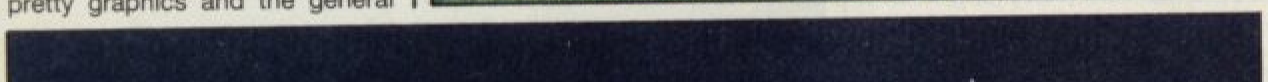
The reason for this is somewhat abstruse to say the least. It appears that a secret masonic society of Green Magicians (here we go!) has been working behind the scenes subverting society and changing the land's fortunes and that of its inhabitants. To counter these nefarious dealings, a Guardian from beyond the realms of time has chosen the player to undertake the great quest and save civilisation as he knows it. (Stop yawning!). However, this particular Guardian is not what one might expect, he wears a herring-bone overcoat, tends to forget words and his main aim in life appears to be avoiding his wife and kids (not as daft as he looks perhaps).

Jinxter's cast of supporting characters include a megalomaniac gardener, a postmistress who thinks she's Calamity Jane and a dim-witted postman who goes by he name of Poor Bloody Lebling (nothing to do with Infocom's David I trust?).

Whilst being crushed at the last PCW show, Anita Sinclair took me on whirlwind tour of an unfinished *Jinxter*; she demonstrated the pretty graphics and the general



Like a red rag to a bull – take nothing at face value because this is the first Magnetic Scrolls adventure where objects in the pictures that don't appear in the text may be EXAMINEd



A bridge not far enough – don't dally, staring at the beautiful landscape, there's much to be done. (All three pictures are from the Amiga)



In pale, sunlit hues, the conservatory where may a table-cloth be found

feel of the game. She also told me that the player cannot actually die within *Jinxter*. This was music to my ears as it meant I could be as careless in the game as I am in real life and no harm would come to me. It appears to be true, as on-coming buses, rampaging bulls and the like do their very best to end your enjoyment without success. This approach may at first seem a trifle wimpish, but within the game's context it works very well and allows the player to get full enjoyment from playing without fear of death. And what are you doing in this deathless existence? The basic aim is to find a number of charms and a bracelet (that needs reassembling) with which the evil wizards/witches can be defeated, and peace and harmony restored be to the land.

Jinxter has everything that its predecessors had and more. The system used to create Magnetic Scrolls adventures has obviously been tightened up, and works extremely well in this game. Graphics on both ST and Amiga versions are very attractive and seem to get better as the game progresses. The prose is exquisite, full of ambience and often very amusing. I particularly

OTHER FORMATS

No clear indication yet as to release dates, but other machines to be covered are Macintosh £34.95, Apple II £19.95, Amstrad PCW £24.95 and CPC 6128 £19.95, Atari 800 £19.95, Spectrum +3 £15.95, Commodore 64/128 £19.95 and PC £24.95 (all diskette prices)





enjoyed the path joke but won't ruin potential players' enjoyment by revealing it. What else can I say? It is Magnetic Scrolls's best adventure to date and with a record like theirs, how can you resist . . . go and buy it.

ATMOSPHERE 93%
INTERACTION 91%
OVERALL 92%

THE JADE STONE

Marlin Games
SPECTRUM Cassette: £2.95

Every so often an adventure comes my way which, although having been written using a utility such as *GAC* or the *PAW*, stands head and shoulders above the rest of the normally non-inspirational efforts I get to peruse. One such game is *The Jade Stone* by Linda Wright of Marlin Games, if this lady's name sounds familiar it is probably because her previous adventures include *Black Fountain* and *Sharpe's Deed*, both of which were written with *GAC* and both achieved some success for Incentive Software. Linda has decided to market this particular game herself and so far it is only available direct from her company – the address is at the end of this review.

Text*The Jade Stone* – a *PAW* adventure – tells the story of a Princess and her attempts to rescue her lover (Amanton) and at the same time (probably during lunch breaks) save her father's kingdom of Nulom. It transpires that the evil sorcerer, Mallumo of Kradoom, is about to declare war on Nulom and, wishing to impress the princess's father, Amanton sets off in an attempt to thwart his dastardly plans. Unfortunately it is not long before news of Amanton's progress ceases, and indeed all knowledge of his whereabouts is lost. The reason soon becomes clear; Mallumo sends a ransom note to the king demanding an exchange: either give up Nulom or the princess in return for Amanton's freedom.

The king is enraged. He immediately orders his army to venture forth and put an end to the evil sorcerer's insolence. However, the princess does not quite share her father's confidence in the army and decides to lend a helping hand. She learns of the existence of the Jade Stone, a magic gem which may have the power to stop Mallumo . . . if only she can find it.

The first element in *The Jade Stone* to impress me was the obvious thought that has gone into its creation. Most inputs have been anticipated and the player usually gets some sort of coherent answer to valid commands. The parser on the *PAW* is fairly versatile, and Linda appears to have used it extensively so that quite complex sentences may be input and understood. There is also a speech-mode which allows you to talk to most of the other characters – and there are many – you may meet during the quest, and a reply is often forthcoming for most commands.

Location descriptions are a little sparse but are well written, and obviously memory, or the lack of it, must be a factor to be taken into consideration. It's no good having dripping prose if there is nothing to actually do in the game, while on the other hand plenty of puzzles and no atmosphere (which seems to be the norm with adventures created on this type of utility) can make a game very dull to play. *The Jade Stone* has the balance about right, although from a personal point of view I think the graphics within the game are wasted space, they add nothing to the game, but from the marketing angle adventures with graphics tend to sell better than those without. Why this should be is, and probably will, remain a mystery to me.

A FOUL

While in winge-mode I'll just mention the swearing syndrome; if you input a four-letter word into *The Jade Stone*, the game replies by quitting and restarting. I've never understood why people do this – by making the game react to a foul input surely the author is recognising, even hoping, that players will try out these words when playing, after all authors obviously go through the effort to input the words into the vocabulary in the first place and then program the game to react appropriately. Why not just ignore the fact that these unnecessary words exist . . . at least in the world of adventuring. Before any clever dick writes to ask why I don't ignore such words myself and not input them, every game has to be thoroughly playtested, and all avenues must be attempted to get a fair idea of how they work.

The Jade Stone comes in two parts and consists of some clever puzzles and some obscure ones, sufficient ambience and lots of user-friendliness. For the meagre sum of under three pounds this game is a must for adventurers who fancy being a princess for a while, and are fed up with being ripped off by over-priced, utility written games.

The Jade Stone may be purchased from **Marlin Games, *19 Briar Close, Nailsea, Bristol BS19 1QG*.**

ATMOSPHERE 71%
INTERACTION 72%
OVERALL 76%

PRESS ANY KEY

DEJA VU

Mindscape/Mirrorsoft
AMIGA Diskette: £29.95
ATARI ST Diskette: £24.95
COMMODORE 64 Diskette only: £14.95
PC release is imminent

I'm sure I've played this adventure before but I can't remember when.

From behind a grey empty mist, reality shimmers into focus as consciousness slowly returns. The bump on your head and the blood stain on your clothes indicate that perhaps the events leading to this predicament were somewhat nefarious. If only you could remember . . . everything around you is vaguely familiar and yet you cannot actually recall where you are or, perhaps more worrying, who you are.

The mystery begins in the john of Joe's Bar. A coat and gun are hanging on a peg here, they will probably be of some use later especially as there is money in the coat pocket and bullets in the gun. An examination of the mirror above the sink results in a face, which you feel you should know, staring back at you with a vacant gaze. Is this you? Exploring the immediate surroundings reveals a number of small clues including, on the landing wall, a poster of a once famous boxer whose face is the same as that of the guy in the mirror, so you now know what you look like and even what you are or were. Now all you need to do is discover why you have a bump on the head, blood on your clothes and no memory.

After finding the secret elevator and various odd objects (including one dead body) lying around it is time to leave the bar and venture forth onto the streets of Chicago. Buying a newspaper loosens the vendor's tongue and he informs you that the police are currently investigating a murder and the man they are looking for fits your description exactly. It looks like your task is obvious; find out who and what you are and clear yourself of murder in the process. Nothing to it.

IN A HURRY

Déjà Vu (French for 'seen before') is an icon-driven adventure, a genre which seems to work much better on the 16-bit than 8-bit machines, although the Commodore 64 version tries very hard to disprove this theory and indeed is at least as playable as the ST game if a little slower and with less impressive graphics. The screen is dominated by a representation of the player's surroundings, with windows to one side depicting the inventory and any items which may lurk inside opened objects. Below is a text window filled with location descriptions, messages and results of actions taken by the player. All graphics are very nicely done and are enhanced here and there with suitable sound effects.

At the top of the screen is a command box. This includes all the actions available to the player at any particular time, such as EXAMINE, OPEN, OPERATE and SPEAK. The idea is to click the cursor on, for example, OPEN in the command box and then click on the desk within the location graphic and voilà, if there is anything in the desk, a window opens with the contents of the desk pictorially displayed. If you want any item then you can click on its pictographic and then *drag* it into the inventory window. Without going into all the game's little idiosyncrasies I will just mention that by moving the cursor onto closed doors and double-clicking the button (mouse on 16-bit, joystick on 8-bit) the program understands you want the door opened and will do it. The same double-click technique goes for examining items and going places, very useful for those of us in a hurry.

Déjà Vu includes a few oddities (such as having to open the corpse to find out what it is carrying!) and can be a mite slow where movement from one location to another is concerned, but overall it is a well-implemented, polished, graphical adventure. It succeeds in involving the player from the very start and slowly dragging him deeper into the world of . . . er . . . oh, what is that word used to describe loss of memory . . . ?

ATMOSPHERE 84%
INTERACTION 78%
OVERALL 81%



Let's open this corpse and see what it's carrying – ST screen



The Commodore 64 graphics are no match for the 16-bit machines but the the gameplay is all there

The face staring back from the ST at you looks familiar . . .



TERRAMEX THE WORLD GO ROUND!



FROM GRAND SLAM ENTERTAINMENT ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS TO BE WON, PLUS THE GAME TERRAMEX!

FROM DEEP within the cold emptiness of space a spinning ball of death hurtles on an unknowing path of destruction. Its place of origin may be unknown, but its destination is clear: Earth. Only one man has the the power to stop its destructive course, a mad professor who resides deep within a mountain complex. His plan to deflect the asteroid by constructing a massive bat, which will hopefully knock the rock ball safely away, relies on finding several vital items with which to build the crazy construction. This is where you come in. Whilst viewing the title screen of *Terramex* you may choose to be either a German, English, French, Japanese or American explorer – and your choice affects which objects you need to complete the game (for more details see the review elsewhere in THE GAMES MACHINE).

Grand Slam Entertainment and THE GAMES MACHINE have put their heads together (not a pretty sight) and come up with a crazy clutch of goodies for the lucky winner of this *Terramex* competition. First prize is a list of the items which may or may not be found in **Grand Slam**'s *Terramex*. These every-home-should-have-one items consist of: a cricket ball, a mini vaccuum cleaner, an umbrella, a cup of tea (mug and teabags), a flash gun, a six-pack of beer, a uni-cycle and a silvery coin. For 12 runners up we shall be awarding a copy of the game *Terramex*, so don't forget to include the particular make of computer you own (the *Terramex* formats are listed here).

Terramex **is available for: SPECTRUM, COMMODORE 64, AMSTRAD CPC, AMIGA, ATARI ST and MSX.**

All you have to do is correctly answer the five questions below and write them down on a postcard, or the back of a sealed envelope, together with your name, age, address and computer, and send your entry to **TERRAMEX COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.**

The first correct entry pulled out of the hat will win. Entries must reach us by February 18. Please note that as one one of the prizes is an alcoholic liquid, entrants under eighteen years of age cannot be considered for the first prize, otherwise our standard competition rules apply – see the masthead for details.

TERRAQUESTIONS

1) What are cricket balls traditionally made from?
2) What do suction carpet cleaners and the FBI have in common?
3) Which famous nanny (the one we see every Christmas) can fly with an umbrella?
4) Which American seaport is famous for its tea party?
5) Who invented the camera?

PARANOID PSYCHOTICS

Stay Alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy! John Woods reviews two RPGs – one a rules system, the other a boardgame – likely to keep the winter cold at bay but as likely to chill the spine.

Two **Games Workshop** products feature this month – hardly surprising since the prolific Nottingham-based company are the only sizeable British games manufacturer outside the 'family' market. There's been some debate as to whether this is good for the industry, and I for one would be glad to see a little more competition. Whilst Games Workshop have had deserved successes with British printings of American games, some recent home-grown releases have been less thrilling. In particular, I felt *Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play* (featured last issue) and the boardgame *Blood Royale* – full of good ideas – were let down by patchy overall design and irritatingly bad proofreading.

This month's two offerings are a refreshing contrast – both excellent in their very different ways.

PARANOIA 2nd EDITION

Role-Playing Rules
Games Workshop/West End Games Inc
Hardback 160pp, £12.95

'SERVE THE COMPUTER THE COMPUTER IS YOUR FRIEND!
The Computer wants you to be happy. If you are not happy, you may be used as reactor shielding.'

West End Games describe *Paranoia* as 'A lighthearted game of terror, death, bureaucracies, and scientists, mutants, dangerous weapons and insane robots', which just about says it all! Set in an underground, post-holocaust city – Alpha Complex, players take the role of Troubleshooters chosen by the insane ruling Computer to carry out special missions for it; such as terminating a group of heavily-armed Traitors within the Complex, making safe a melt-down reactor, or even travelling out of Alpha Complex to the mysterious Outside.

No other RPG offers gamesmasters a better chance to indulge in sadistic and megalomaniac leanings, as they become the all-powerful Computer and its vast bureaucracy of faithful minions, sending unfortunate players into ludicrously dangerous situations with hopelessly unsuitable equipment (experimental Plasma Generator anyone?) and misleading or impossible instructions. And if by some chance the players survive the dangers the GM has in store for them, they still have each other to reckon with; in this paranoid world, where a single ill-considered word or deed is proof of treason, player characters are liable to be instantly executed by quick-thinking 'comrades' if they give so much as a hint of disloyalty to the Computer.

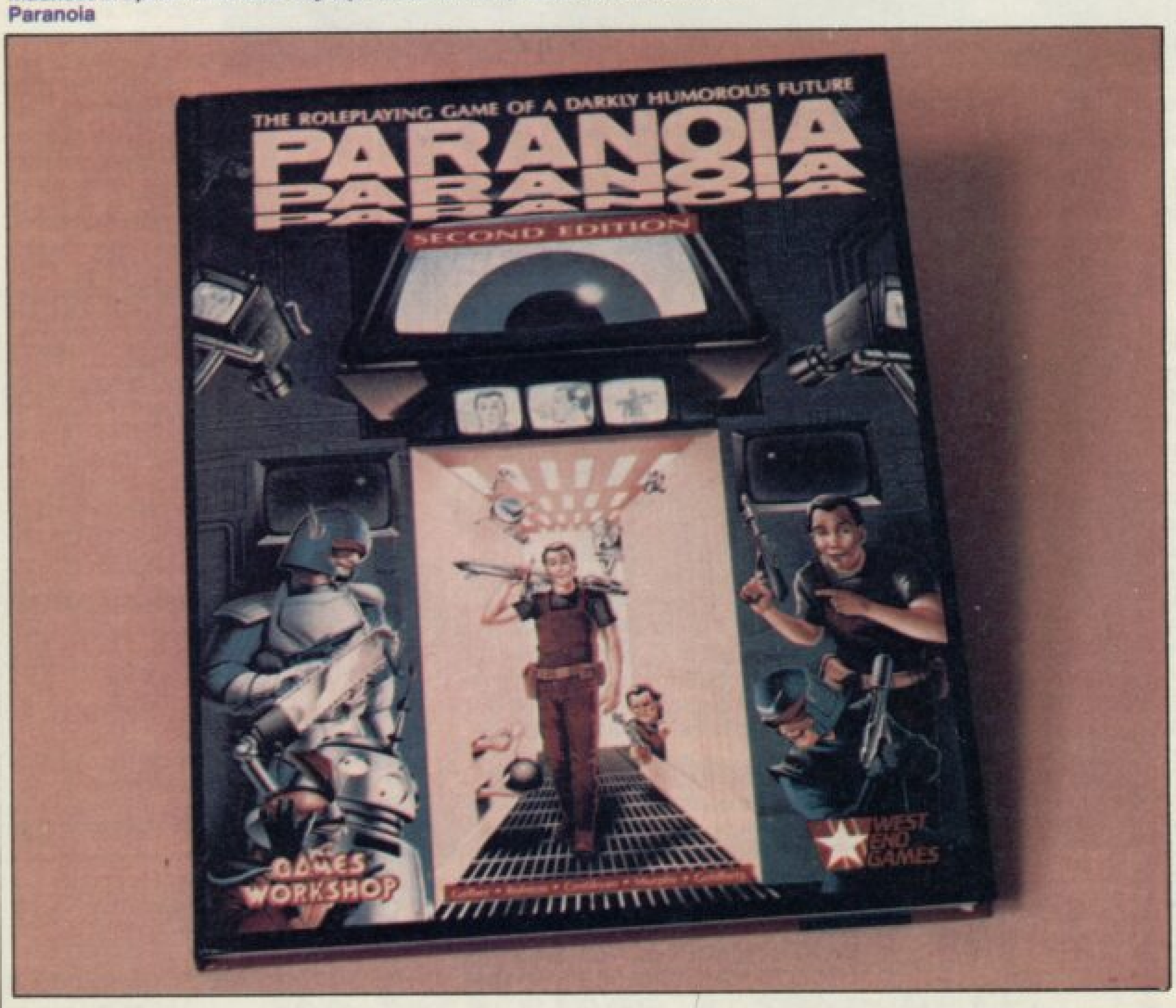
Characters drop like flies, with the rules recommending a typical casualty rate of 50-100% per adventure. Fortunately, each PC has several clones ready to replace him or her in the common event of an early demise.

The Second Edition of the rulebook is attractively set out, with heaps of cartoon illustrations adding nicely to the game's darkly humorous atmosphere. A few changes have been made, most noticeably the streamlining of the PC skill system. There is a section on converting characters from old rules to new, but few PCs are likely to be around long enough to be worth the effort! The rulebook's layout and organisation has improved greatly, with tables and charts – that cluttered the first edition – moved to a pull-out reference section. Most welcome are the new introductory sections for beginning players and GMs – *Paranoia* is a more difficult game than most to GM well, so the new hints and tips make a real difference. The book also includes a complete 25-page adventure to get you started.

Paranoia is a lighthearted RPG, ideal for a group fed up with over-complex rules and players who take their characters too seriously . . . and for GMs who want to get their own back! The new edition is far more suitable for those with little or no RPG experience, and is excellent value for a complete system (just add a 20-sided die). First Edition players should consider moving up too – the rule changes aren't drastic, but improved book organisation makes the GM's life easier.

'Remember: Stay Alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy!'

Madness in a post-holocaust city is provided in the updated second edition of Paranoia



THE FURY OF DRACULA

Board Game, 2-4 players
Games Workshop £12.99

The atmosphere of gothic horror that pervades this boardgame began to have a strange effect on me as soon as I opened the box. As I thumbed through the arcane lore in the sinister black rulebook, gingerly assembled the four-part parchment-coloured map and, with shaking hands, examined the dozens of event cards with their marble-look backs and playing counters covered with strange and horrible designs, I knew it could not be long before I was transformed . . . into a vampire!

It is 1898. Count Dracula is terrorising Europe. Only Lord

Godalming, Doctor Seward and Professor Van Helsing dare stand against him. They must battle against Dracula's evil henchmen, destroy vampires he has created, and finally confront the dread Count himself. The action ranges over the whole of Europe as the fearless hunters use every means at their disposal to find the trail of the Prince of the Undead, track him and finally, with luck, rid the world forever of this terrible fiend. But the Count is devilish cunning . . .

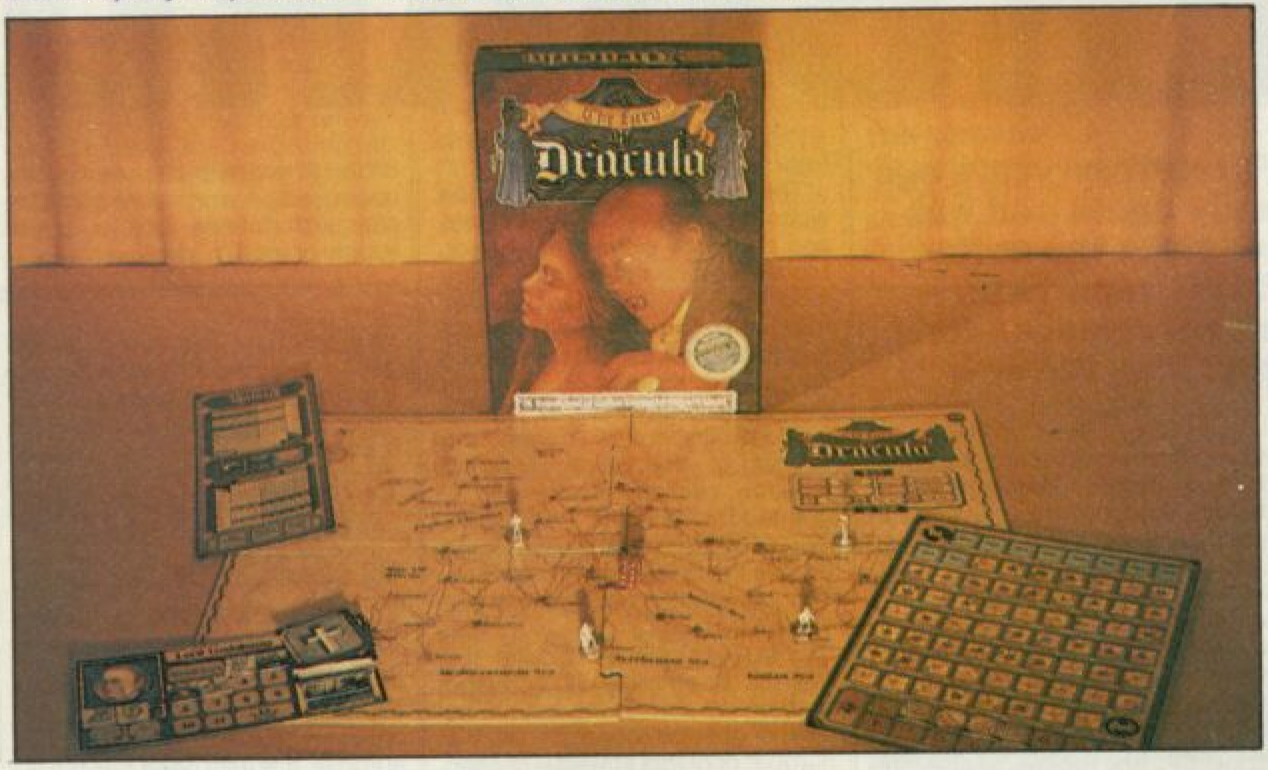
One player takes the role of Dracula, who moves around Europe in secret on a chart hidden from the view of the others, leaving traps, hoaxes, henchmen and vampires in the cities he passes through. The other player(s) control the three Hunters who must move around the map on the Count's trail. They have the advantage of superior numbers and occasional assistance provided by the results of Event Cards, but they must be sure to obtain suitable weapons or they will be no match for Dracula in combat.

Tension builds early as the Hunters pass through city after city with no trace of Dracula. Suddenly, one stumbles upon the Count's trail and has to deal with whatever nastiness has been left lying in wait. If the Hunters survive encounters and finally trap and confront the Count, the game is by no means over! Dracula is more than a match for an ill-prepared Hunter, and combat may result in the Count escaping, leaving the Hunter bitten. Another bite and the unfortunate victim himself becomes a vampire! Hunters win as a group if they destroy Dracula, with the individual Hunter who gained the most Valour Points (awarded for courageous deeds) being overall winner. Darkness (and the Dracula player) triumphs if the Count infests Europe with his vampire minions. A typical game might last up to three hours.

The game's physical components are of excellent quality, even including metal miniatures to represent the four protagonists. The rules take a couple of careful readings to digest, but after that the pull-out reference section and the tables on the Strategy and Movement screen that hides Dracula's actions from the other players, make the rulebook largely unnecessary during play.

Great fun and good value at the price. The gradual build-up of tension and the sudden and dramatic confrontations make the game a real, er, scream to play. Just the thing to while away the long, dark, sinister winter evenings . . . Heh heh heh!

Excellent quality components add to the gothic horror of the **Fury Of Dracula**



GOING OVERBOARD

The success of *Trivial Pursuit* two years ago made board games trendy again and has returned them from the loft to the coffee table. THE GAMES MACHINE reports on – and evaluates – four recent releases for kids aged eight to eighty, plus the new office toy.

GAMES NEWS

While *Legoland* and *Transformers* still rank number one and two respectively in the Toy charts, the highest entry for an adult board game is at number 11 (in December) for *Trivial Pursuit*. And that's the only adult game in the top 25.

San Serif have new range of games they hope will reach the heights of their *Trivial Pursuit*. The boards open up on an adaptation of Central TV's quiz show *Sporting Triangles*. Later in Spring comes the relaunch of *Ubi* by *Horne-Abbot*, creators of *Trivial Pursuit*. And that will be followed by *Seaside Frolics*, *Backwords*, *I-Quest*, *Verbositi* and *The Antiques Roadshow* game. Licensing in the board game market is as big a business as it is with software.

Milton Bradley Ltd, better known as **MB Games**, have squandered further moral considerations for a sequel to the best-selling *Scruples*, due early this year. *Scruples II* isn't really any different from the original but provides the players with a new set of moral dilemmas and embarrassing situations.

Also from MB Games is a rather amusing offering called *Game Of Games*, incorporating a standard board which the players move around, each square having a different sporting event on it such as golf, skittles, ring toss and many others, all made in miniatures. Having landed on a square, the player plays one of the 14 game and then moves on. Good family fun.

A favourite which came in too late to be fully played was **Kenner Parker**'s *Spitting Image* game. Playing the world leaders, Maggie, Gorby and Ronnie, the objective is to uncover secrets about the other leaders whilst keeping yours hidden. And their other newie is a great party-play. It is called *Dare* and, like *Trivial Pursuit*, the object is to move around a board answering general knowledge questions – but should you get one wrong a forfeit must be paid in the form of a dare. All the dares are silly and can cause an awful lot of embarrassment – not for the shy games players by any means.



Slick packaging and Dallas-style hotels add up to a game aimed to improve skills in greed and meanness

HOTEL

MB Games, £17.99, 2-4 players

Although *Hotel* itself has been around for some time MB have done an excellent rerelease for it, giving a stylish new look to the packaging and adding a beautiful collection of 30 model hotels which you build from cardboard kits.

The objective is to join the ranks of the stinking rich by building hotels and taking as much money from your guests as possible.

The game plays like an elaborate version of *Monopoly*, and the more players the better. Moving around the board, players landing on unoccupied squares may buy and thereafter build hotels. Buying involves stumping up cash for the plot of land from the reserves given at the start or from profits made during the course of the game. Building requires planning permission – granted by the roll of a die, which let you build free of charge, at the double the cost, or not build at all. The bigger the hotel, the more value it has.

Entrances, placed around the board force other players who land on them to stay in the hotel. The size of the bill depends on the number of nights stayed – chosen from the roll of a die – and how large the hotel is.

Playing *Hotel* can lead to making enemies because as soon as one player begins to make a lot of money and gains control of the board it is *very* difficult to hit back. Like *Monopoly*, the game can last for several hours if played until completion.

THE VERDICT

Hotel, although aimed at eight-years-old and up, can become involved and time consuming. It proves immense fun to play, and the board and accessories are such an attractive sight it is quite a disappointment when the whole thing gets packed up in its box again. Concentration is a must, although actual brainpower is not over-used. A worthwhile game to play with friends and a good supply of food 'n 'drink.

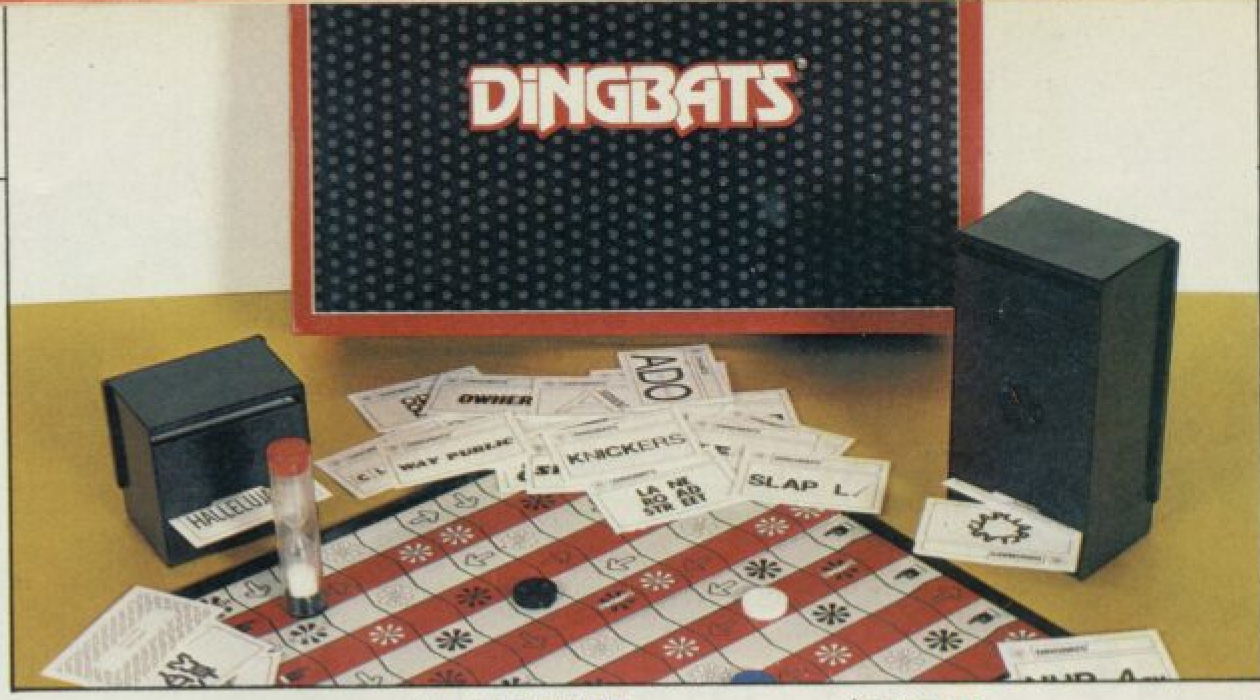
THE GAME OF QUOTATIONS

MB Games, £20.00, 2 players and more

After an extensive advertising campaign, MB Games have finally released *Quotations* – and to our surprise, it is very good and highly entertaining.

Quotations is played with nothing but the actual question cards themselves, several hundred in all, each containing four questions. The cards are divided up into five categories - Who Said That? (straightforward, a quotation is read and the author's name has to be given), Quote Vote (like Who Said That? but with multiple choice answers given), Buzz Words (which makes you guess what quotation is





DINGBATS

Waddingtons, £10.99
2-4 players

The Dingbats series of puzzles began in the *Daily Mail* years ago and now creator **Paul Sellers** has devised a board game around them which draws its origins from the age-old classic *Snakes And Ladders*. The object is to get from one end of the board to the other by rolling dice. As in *Snakes And Ladders*, you can fall down the board or move up – or sideways by landing on a directional arrow. The Dingbats are encountered when a player lands on a Dingbat or Diabolical Dingbat square, and if you haven't seen a Dingbat before, they can be tricky. I mean, what does a card with STEP PETS PETS mean to you? One step forward, two steps back – that is what it should mean anyway. And so it goes on.

THE VERDICT
We didn't really think a awful lot of the game, it has a tendency to get annoying because of inconsistency in the difficulty of the puzzles – but good marks for effort and decent packaging.

DINGBATS
Snakes And Ladders for the etymologist

hidden in a story), True or False (Did Princess Anne really say 'People expect me to neigh, grind my teeth, paw the ground and swish my tail' – yes she did!) and Missing Words (guess the word missing from a given quotation).

Each player is given seven cards and has to get rid all of them by answering the questions correctly. *Quotations* is not very difficult to play – even if you don't think you know any quotations it is amazing how many suddenly come to mind when playing the game.

THE VERDICT
Without a board *Quotations* appears to lack a competing element, but still manages to provide plenty of enjoyment. Although you probably won't be playing it day-in, day-out, it is the sort of game to return to often when you have friends around. And it has a rather nice designer-type box to boot!

Who said what, if anything?
QUOTATIONS



GARY LINEKER'S FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR

Gremlin Board Games, £14.99, 2-4 players

Gremlin Graphics have spread their proverbial wings with their first board game release – unfortunately it's a bit of a half-hearted effort. Playing Mr Lineker (a rather wobbly bit of white plastic), the object is to move from the Fourth Division up to the First and become Footballer Of The Year.

Players automatically move a square per go, throwing a combination of five dice (one for skill and two each for home and away scores) to determine the outcome of the square's matches, thus gaining or losing status points. Status points are also affected by the outcome of random incidents, picked from a pile of Incident Cards when on an appropriate square. Additionally there are squares for League Cup, UEFA, Winners Cup and World Cup matches involving up to a further six dice, and doing well here raises the player's status considerably. The game ends simultaneously for all players when they reach the last square on the board.

THE VERDICT
Very young football fanatics may enjoy it, but it is too repetitive and too slow moving to hold any serious interest. This is entirely a game of luck with no skill elements involved, and with 11 dice there is hardly any need for thought.

All dice rolls and incidents: a game more for the younger football fan

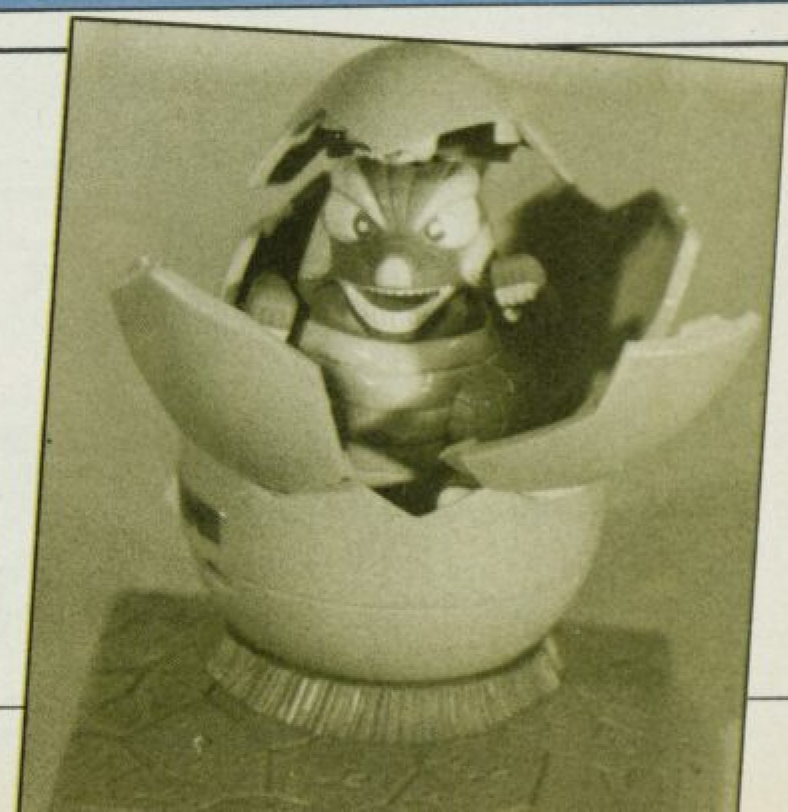


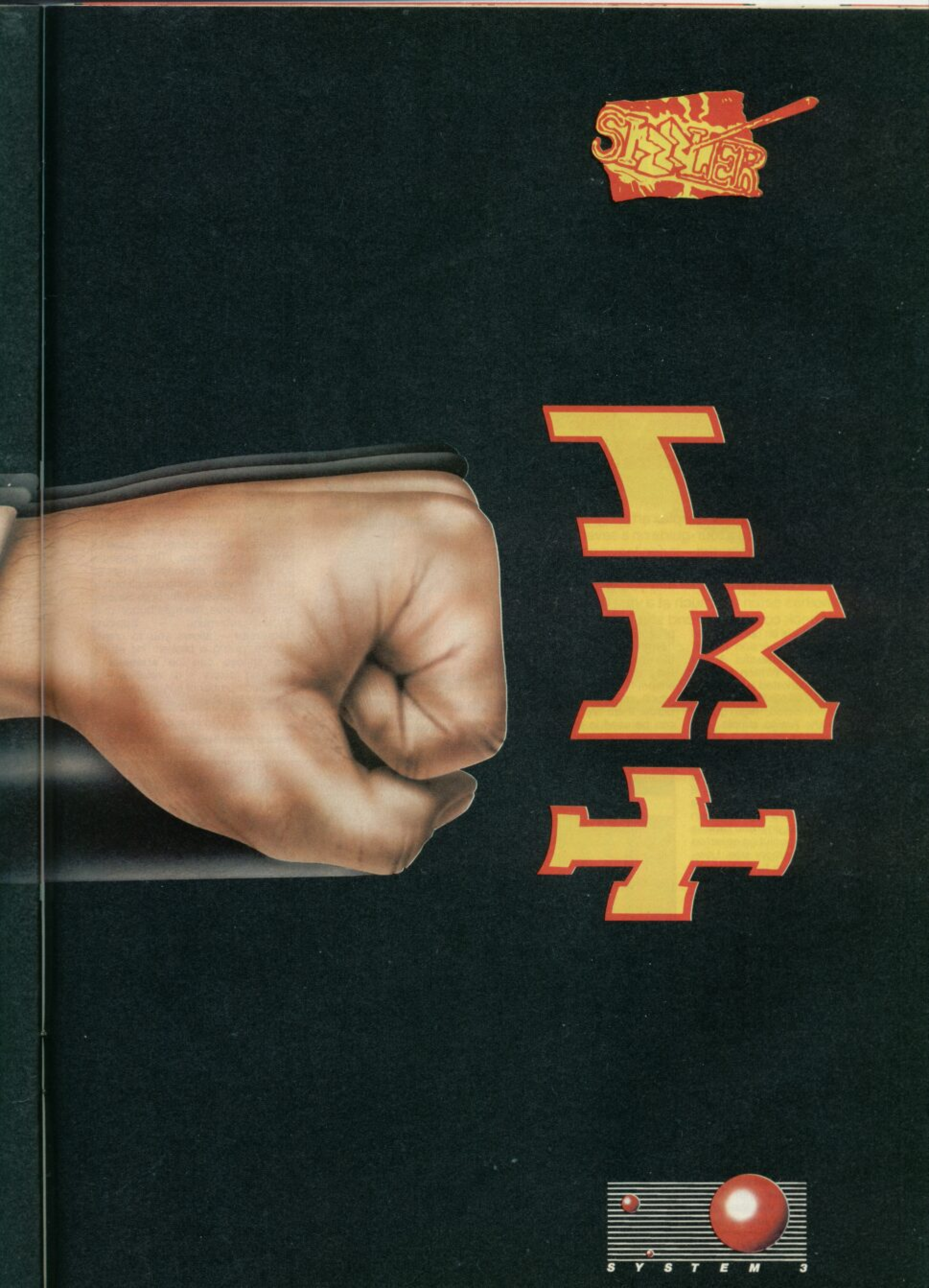
EGGZILLA

MB Games, £5.99 or less

Eggzilla is really just a small toy, but one that has entertained us GAMES MECHANICS and guests for many an hour. You press the baby Godzilla down onto a secured spring released by a timer, and attempt to reconstruct the shell from several fragmented pieces which only fit together in one way. The object is to complete the shell before Godzilla pops up. Simple and highly amusing, it makes a rather nice shelf ornament waiting for some unsuspecting guest to play with.

The very latest in egg-timers





SIZZLER
IK+
SYSTEM 3

THE DYNAMIC BRUSH GRABBER

In the second of our reviews on state-of-the-art graphics utilities, Robin Candy reckons Deluxe Paint II **is the program by which other art utilities should be judged.**

Explaining the facilities of a complex art program such as *Deluxe Paint II* is a bit like being a tour-guide on a seven-centre package holiday lasting a few minutes – it can leave you breathless and bewildered! And yet there is so much to this utility that it is probably inevitable reading this that you will end up feeling like a guest who has eaten too much at a vast banquet. Meanwhile, I should sit back comfortably and study the menu.

D*eluxe Paint II* is an updated and very improved version two of the highly successful Amiga *Deluxe Paint*. Written by Dan Silva and marketed in the UK by Electronic Arts, *Deluxe Paint II* makes creating sophisticated, high quality graphics on the Amiga simple. The program operates in a full WIMP environment, negating the need for screens full of text.

The first requirement is to select a working resolution; *Deluxe Paint II* caters for four: low, medium, interlace and high. The number of on-screen colours available at any one time is dependent on the resolution selected and the Amiga's memory size. Low-res accommodates up to 32 colours; medium-res 16 and high-res 16 with the pixels occupying a quarter of the space taken up by low-res pixels. Interlace represents the middle ground between medium- and high-res while still allowing a maximum of 32 colours. A drawback to interlace and high-res is that the screen is subject to flicker because it updates at a slower rate (every 30th of a second as opposed to every 60th in low- and medium-res).

TEN LITTLE ICONS

The basic drawing functions are all available on the main screen. This consists of a work area with the drawing functions down the right of the screen and another bar across the top from which further functions can be accessed. Both bars can be switched off to reveal the entire work area.

Every utility has its own jargon and preferred working style; with *Deluxe Paint II* the brushes are the whole program – everything form a single pixel to the whole work area can be designated as a 'brush'. Situated at the screen's top right-hand side are ten preset brushes varying in size and shape, two consisting of dot patterns which are useful when airbrushing. Below them are ten functions which can be used in conjunction with the currently selected brush. Selections are made by pressing the left mouse button, and each function is represented by an icon which is highlighted when in use. While this cuts out the need for text, the icons are not always indicative of the tool's function, which can be very confusing at first. In most cases, clicking the right mouse button on an icon produces a window with modifiers for the current tool. Here's a brief look at the tools.

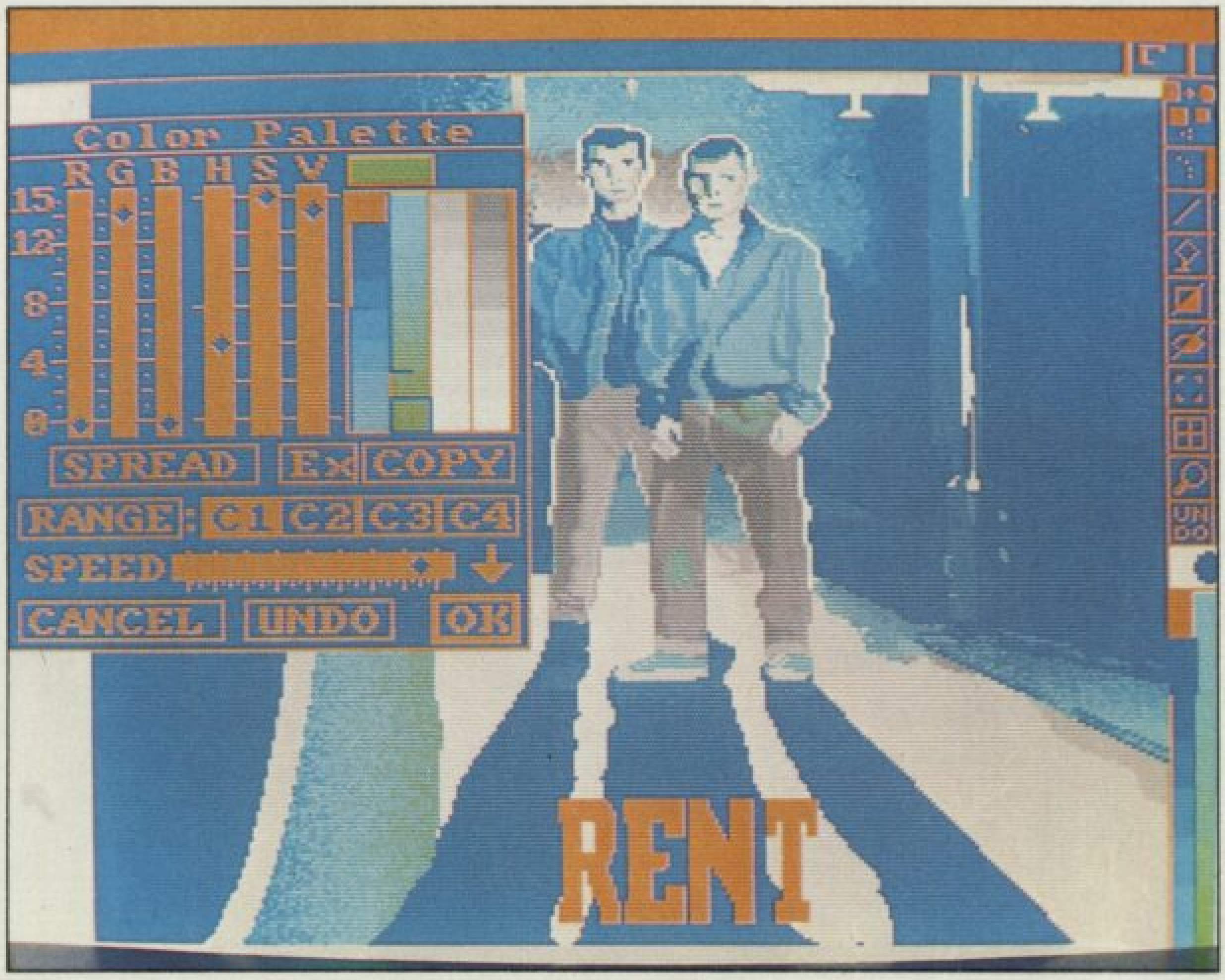
One of the most exciting features in Deluxe Paint II **is the Brush Grab function.**

The **Dotted** and **Continuous Freehand** tools have obvious functions, but Dotted is fast and keeps up with the cursor – useful for roughing in shapes. They both follow the cursor's path, Continuous drawing a solid line behind it.

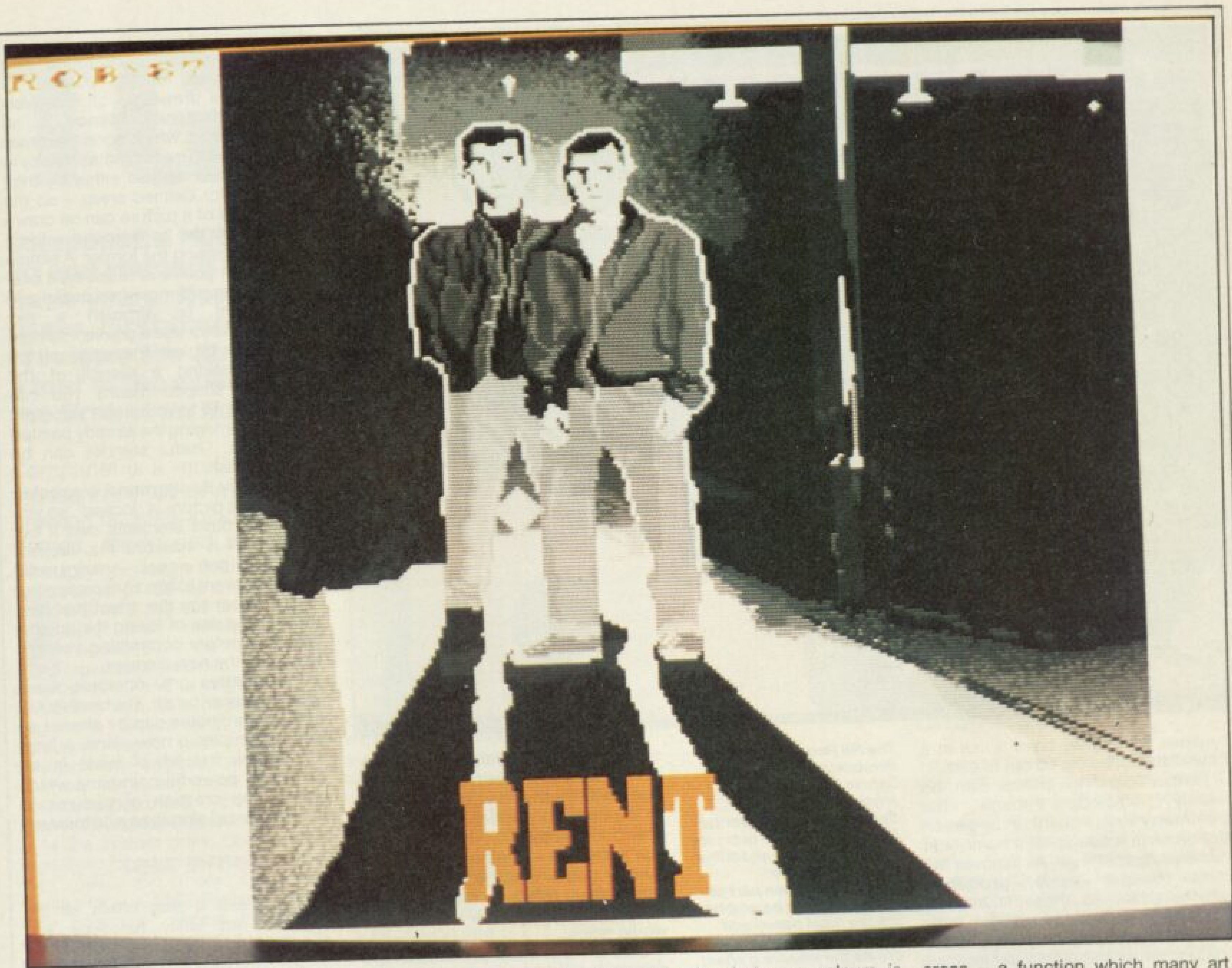
Straight Line draws straight lines from one specified point to another with the click, drag, release method. **Curve** operates similarly; having specified the curve's start point and dragged to its end point, the arc between the two points is created by moving the mouse. The potential curve is shown, and once the desired arc is achieved, clicking the left button fixes it on screen. With both Straight Line and Curve, the right button pull-down sub-menu – **Spacing Requester** – allows you to create spaces, giving a broken line effect. The spaces can be **absolute** – specified pixels – or **relative** – a specified number of spaces along the length of the line.

GRADED GRAINS

Deluxe Paint II starts to come into its



The Colour Palette Requester, showing both the RGB and HSV mixing panels, animation cycle range below and cycle speed controller



own with the **Fill** tool. At the basic level you can fill any enclosed shapes with either the selected foreground (left button) or background (right button) colour. Over the icon the right button pull-down sub-menu is the **Fill Requester**, with which fills can be customised. Under this menu **Pattern** provides for the creation of user-defined pixel patterns, and is used in conjunction with the Brush Grabber (more of that later).

Gradient is one of the most powerful fill options I have ever seen. It is used in conjunction with the Colour Palette Requester (and more of that later) to fill areas with a range of colours that gradually fade from one to the next. First the desired range of colours is specified from the palette. Then, returning to the Fill Requester, the graduation between colours is defined by using the **Dither** slider; the further it is to the right, the greater the mixing of colours, when set to the far left colours do not mix at all but appear in bands. The next stage is to select one of the three possible fills. These are **Vertical**, **Horizontal** and **Horizontal Line**. Vertical and Horizontal fill with the colour gradient going up/down or left/right respectively. Horizontal Line calculates the distance between the left and right borders of the area to be filled and fills each horizontal line individually so that each line receives the full complement of colours in the colour gradient; so if something is drawn in perspective, the fill will follow the edges of the shape so that it is filled-in realistically. An excellent function! Effectively realistic spheres become easy – draw a circle then use a graduated Horizontal Line fill. The end result is pleasing and has taken virtually no time at all.

A picture taken from the Pet Shop Boys, Rent, rapidly hand-drawn by Robin Candy. The icon bars top and right have been cleared to show the entire work area

HSV, provides a flexible, alternative colour-mixing system . . .

Deluxe Paint II has very professional magnification and zoom facilities, reaching up to 400 times original pixel size



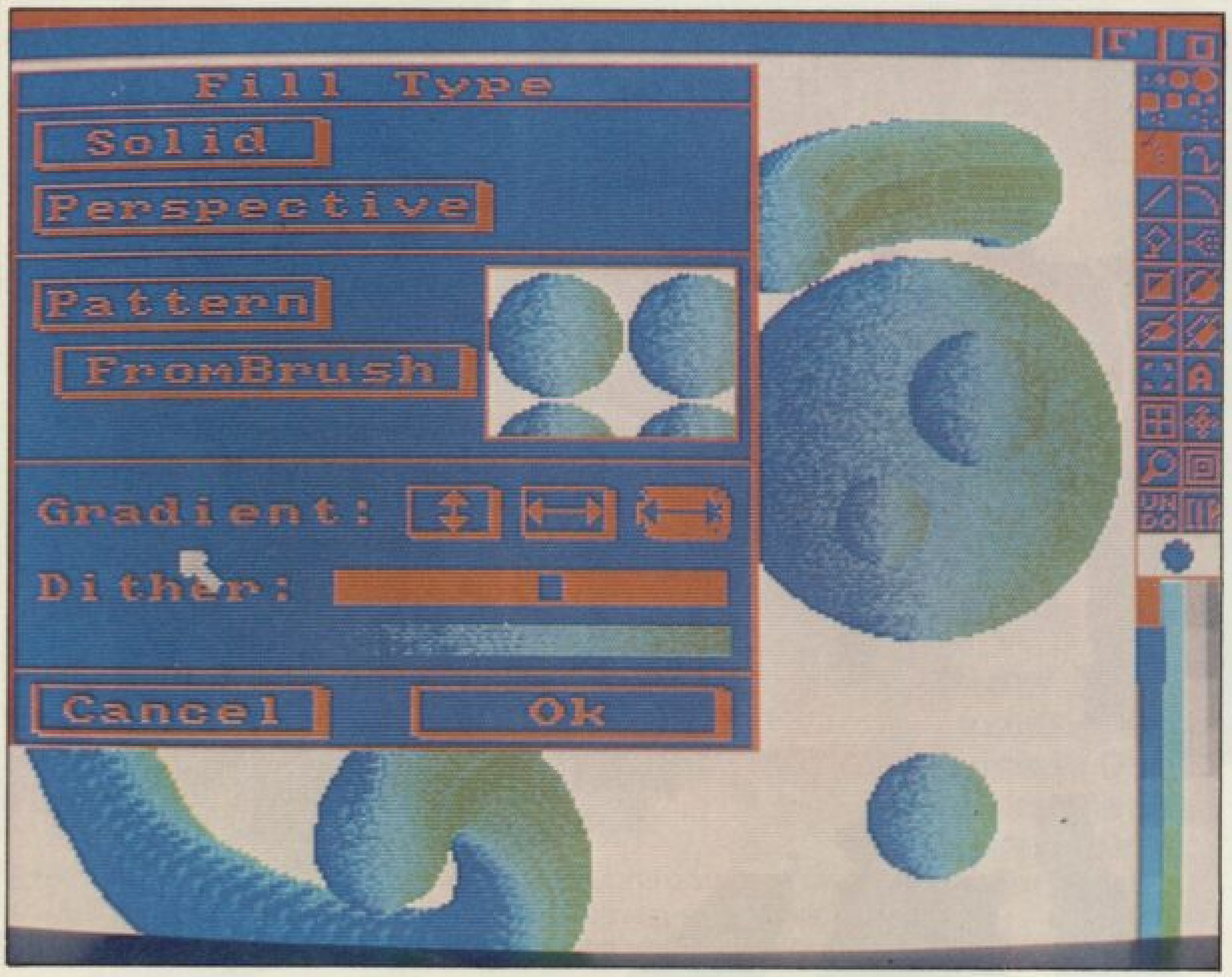
SPRAYING AND SHAPING

The **Airbrush** tool in *Deluxe Paint II* is equally excellent, reproducing a random effect with the current brush shape. The longer the left button is depressed the denser the effect becomes. The right button sub-menu over the spray can icon allows for alteration of the distance from the cursor that the airbrush effects, catering for a range from very coarse to extremely fine airbrushing in small areas – a function which many art utilities neglect to include.

Shapes are not skimped either: there are four icons dealing with drawing shapes and each can be used in conjunction with the Fill Requester to give either filled areas or outlines. Options available are **Rectangles**, **Circles**, **Elipses** and **Polygons** (multi-sided irregular shapes). They all work in a similar manner to the Curve and Line functions by clicking the shape's start point, dragging to the termination point and releasing. Polygons are not complete until the final line meets the start point.

GRABBING

One of the most exciting features in *Deluxe Paint II* is the **Brush Grab** function, which lets you pick up any section of the screen and paint with it. This can be used to create a pattern for the Pattern Fill command. Brush grabbing is the equivalent to the block commands found on many other art utilities, but in *Deluxe Paint II* the brush manipulation commands have been developed to a high level so that complex effects can be easily achieved. Taking an already 'painted' bit of the screen, grabbing it and then smearing it rapidly over the work area in swirls, creates a dazzling effect in seconds! Brushes can be rotated through any angle, flipped, stretched to any size, recoloured and bent through either horizontal or vertical planes to give a distorted image. Any



The Fill Requester, which demonstrates the way **Deluxe Paint II** *turns anything into a 'brush'. Spheres, using Horizontal Line fill, are simple to create with the gradient and dither slider setting the parameters. Then part of the picture can be grabbed (centre inset panel) and used just like a brush to create the smearing effect seen on the screen's lower-left side*

brushes which may have a use at a later date can be saved out to disk.

Further dazzling effects can be rapidly created through the **Symmetry** tool; with this in operation the brush is made up of a number of mirror images of itself. As it moves the mirror images move, producing effects similar to those seen in a kaleidoscope. The right button sub-menu is the **Symmetry Requester** through which the default values may be altered, including the number of mirror images that appear and the central point of the symmetrical pattern. **Mirror** gives each brush a reversed-twin which mirrors its actions. **Cyclic** draws around a point but without the mirror images - the end result is not necessarily symmetrical. **Tile** lets you draw with a number of brushes at the same time but without mirroring them around a central point, creating a definable number of identical images on a selected grid. The distance between tile points can be specified in pixels so that the size of the pattern can be altered.

SETTING THE PALETTE

Picture is a pull-down sub-menu with a host of options including loading and saving routines, screen resolution, page size and quit. It is here that you find colour control options, through a further sub-menu which accesses the **Colour Palette Requester**.

You mix your own palette of up to 32 colours from a possible 4096. There are two methods to colour mixing. The first uses the RGB method – that is mixing **red**, **green** and **blue** in different proportions. This popular method is used on other art utilities such as *Degas Elite* (reviewed last month). The second, HSV, provides a flexible, alternative colour-mixing system that has identical end results. HSV breaks down each colour into its **hue**, **saturation** and **value**. Hue refers to the colour's position in the colour spectrum; saturation refers to the hue's strength – whether it is relatively pure or contains some proportion of white; value refers to the amount of black in a hue and how much light it would reflect.

Deluxe Paint II can produce a tight palette spread between two colours. The first colour is specified, **Spread** is selected and the last colour defined. The program then works out the intermediate shades between the two. It is in the Colour Palette Requester menu that the colour ranges for the gradient fills are defined, and different speed ripple animation effects created by cycling through a colour range.

Stencil is an innovative tool which soon becomes essential with use.

MESSING ABOUT

Mode covers various brush effects. They are **Shade**, **Blend**, **Smear** and **Smooth**. Shade and Blend depend on colour ranges being defined within the Colour Palette Requester. Blend creates a blending effect between the two colours beneath the brush, if they are in the colour range, by adding intermediate shades from the same colour range. Shade is similar but paints with the next higher or next lower colour in the range depending on which of the mouse buttons is pressed. Smooth and Smear do not depend on colour ranges being defined. Smooth uses the entire palette as its range to derive an average of the colours under the brush. Smear takes the colour under the brush and smears it into the adjoining colour to get rid of harsh boundary lines. All of these effects work well producing airbrush effects in a fraction of the time.

The **Effects** menu lets you make stencils, fix the background and define planes for the purpose of perspective drawing – all massively powerful features. **Stencil** is an innovative tool which soon becomes essential with use; it creates masks to protect areas defined either by their colour or for defined areas – so the foreground of a picture can be drawn followed by the background without the latter erasing the former. A simple example: if you have taken care over painting ragged mountain peaks and now want to airbrush a sky background (or use a gradient fill right up to the broken-line edge of the peaks), making a stencil of the mountain shapes means you can airbrush or fill to your heart's content without damaging the already painted mountains. Useful stencils can be saved to disk.

When **Fix Background** is selected the current picture is 'locked', so you can draw other elements over it but when CLR is selected the 'locked' picture is not erased – very useful when you want to modify a picture but would rather see the effect that has, without the risk of losing the original drawing, before committing yourself to adding the new element.

Perspective only operates when using a custom brush. The brush's X,Y and Z coordinates can be altered so that it occupies a new plane. A brief description indeed of what is an extremely powerful command which makes the creation of pictures in perspective as simple as *pi* to master!

AND THE REST . . .

Deluxe Paint II also offers all the standard art utility functions you expect, **Undo** last command, erase screen (CLR), addition of **Text** (with several fonts, styles and sizes, all brush-grabbable for rescaling and manipulation) and x,y-definable invisible **Grids** through the **Gridding Requester** menu.

Magnify allows examination of any section of the screen in greater detail, which is used in conjunction with **Zoom** – and it is a real zoom, continually enlarging the magnification up to an amazing 400 times original size. When magnified, the unenlarged area is shown on the left, duplicating the changes made in the enlarged area, and tools can be used in both areas.

JUDGING OTHERS

Deluxe Paint II is an art utility which others should be judged by. The options available speak for themselves. Not only can complicated effects be achieved easily but the program produces them at breath-taking speed. My only niggle is that the utility is not instantly usable; the icons aren't always clear and it is all too easy for the beginner to get bogged down in the detailed manual, though the 'tutorials' provided do give a good guided tour of the program's capabilities. *Deluxe Paint II* is a marvellous utility with features which were previously only available on computers costing much more than an Amiga. In fact it's almost worth buying an Amiga just to use this graphics package.

TGM ON-LINE

Compunet, a thriving comms industry, has been up and running for the Commodore 64/128 for three years. Now it is ready for ST and Amiga users. First timer Richard Eddy (I-D TGM) previews the Amiga and ST sections and gives a tour of the existing Commodore 64/128 net in the first of an occasional series.

Compunet is a modem network offering communication with thousands of other micro users down the phoneline. Its ever-growing facilities include private mail, free programs, graphics, demos, music and scores of bulletin boards all controlled through one large mainframe computer.

It began in 1984 as an alternative to Prestel and Micronet – which were then merely on-line magazines – the Compunet organisers wanted to offer entertainment and a high level of interaction with its subscribers. The mainframe system and Compunet software took two years of development – originally using a Deck 10 (very large and now obsolete) mainframe borrowed in the evenings from the Business Bureau.

As the system grew, Compunet's organisers found it a necessity to have their own, and more advanced, mainframe – a VME System, which they now use. Almost everything accessible on Compunet is under the general heading of Jungle. It was first designed for small advertisements, educational features and a bulletin board system. However, as the user base expanded so did the use to which the net was put by its subscribers, who proved to be no respecters of Compunet's originally modest early intentions. Graphics began popping up, just done for the sake of it, and suddenly the Compunet crew discovered a file called *Toony Poonz*, created by The Mighty Bogg (GM3) – it was the first music program, something they had never anticipated would be available on the net.

Today the net flourishes – sometimes almost drowns – in music, graphics and combined demos all created by its 7,000-plus subscribers. The beauty of using the net is the power of creation. Anyone can form another branch to the Compunet tree by adding new directories.

COMPUCENSORSHIP

Compunet is capable of constant expansion and alteration as people's tastes shift; it may appear extremely busy on the surface, but behind what is already there, the net is still an empty wilderness waiting to be cultivated by your uploads (UPLDS). You can actually put anything up, type anything you want.

With such freedom for irresponsibility, does Compunet have to censor subscribers' UPLDs? 'Not really,' comments Jane Firbank, Compunet's Editor, 'although when things get out of hand we put people in 'solitary' whereby they can still view the net but are unable to UPLD or download (DNLD).'

However, in three years of operation, Compunet has only expelled two people for crimes of vulgarity, racism and general stupidity. It is a testament to the regard in which subscribers hold the net, and netters tend not to abuse a system that was created for them.

COMPUCOSTS

After paying the quarterly Compunet subscription rate of £15, all you have to worry about is your phone bill. In most areas you can use the local call rate to log-on to the net through one of 66 pick-up points around the country. British Telecom's unit charge is subject to alteration of course, but currently, the local rate is about 60p per hour off-peak (after 6.00pm) and around £4 per hour during the day – one of the reasons why you'll find more activity on the net in the evenings. A notable cost exception is Hull where, through a privately owned telephone company, calls will cost you just the 5p connect charge. Compunet has a lot of users in Hull.

But there is a major saving to be made by paying Compunet an optional £3.00 (exc VAT) quarterly charge for continuous off-peak connection, effectively a prepaid subscription that entitles you to free off-peak phone time. They then make the arrangements with British Telecom to adjust your bill when you dial one of the the 66 local Compunet stations.

COMPUSIXTEEN-BIT

Having earned their spurs among CBM 64/128 users, Compunet has moved into the 16-bit field and previewed services for the Atari ST and Amiga at last year's Personal Computer World Show. Both services – GO AMIGA and GO ST (more detail in the Compuguide section) – should be available for use by the time you read this. And soon, PC users' will be able to log-on to their own Compunet section too.

The Amiga system looks most promising – by using the Amiga's 80-column display and multi-tasking routines the Amiga net can handle two independent windows simultaneously. One window displays the directory while the other shows text frames – making it possible to UPLD or DNLD while editing.

The ST system remains in 40-column mode like the Commodore 64/128. The Compunet ST software was written by John Marshall and is full GEM operated. The system has taken three months to write and has some advantages over the Commodore system, such as logging-on to Partyline takes only a few seconds. As a special bonus when using Compunet with an ST there's a free ultility allowing the ST and Amiga to exchange full colour hi-res pictures – something never done before.

The beauty of using the net is the power of creation

COMPUSETUP

To get started and log-on from home, you will need more than just a computer – although that is definitely an essential: a Commodore 64/128, Atari ST, Amiga or a PC (when that starts). You also require a suitable modem, a Commodore Modem or a Hayes compatible modem such as Pace, Miracle WS4000 or Astrocom. Compunet hopes to offer modems at cheaper prices, around the £125 mark. At the moment the net uses a 1200/75 baud rate, but Compunet is looking to offer a 1200/12 rate, which should UPLD and DNLD files 16 times faster.

Then of course you need a standard modern British Telecom phone wall socket in which to stick your Modem plug – you can use the same one as your phone uses. If that sounds rather obvious, remember the chap who wondered why his Compunet system wasn't working correctly until someone told him he was supposed to plug the modem into a phone socket! If your phone goes through an internal exchange, such as you find in many offices, you will need a splitter, which costs around £2. That's because with an internal exchange, the modem can't autodial, so you need to dial out first with the phone, then the Modem can log-on when the connection is made.

Finally, of course, there's the all-important Compunet Subscription.

TALK TO US!

You can MBX THE GAMES MACHINE by using our I-D (TGM) – any comments you would like to make about the magazine, and suggestions for ideas for the On-line page. We'll try and reply to you!

PRESS ANY KEY

COMPUGUIDE

A whistle-stop tour around the net . . .

INDEX

Like a contents page, the Index is the complete guide to the net, and to all telesoftware – which is anything you can DNLD (GOTO INDEX).

NEWS

Compunet Editor **Jane Firbank**'s own section informs netters about the latest happenings on the net – how the continual debates are raging, whether any regional connection points are not working, and generally anything which is new. Updated two or three times a week, News is a good section to GOTO as soon as you log on.

MAIL

Direct and personal communication is achieved on Compunet by sending other subscribers electronic letters in the form of Mailboxes (MBX). After selecting GOTO MAIL from the main options you are asked who you want to send to. You enter their I-D and a reference to inform them what the communication's about. That reference then appears when they check their mail directory.

From there you can do what you want using a text frame which can also incorporate low-res graphics. Next time the person logs on, the MBX will be waiting. And if you are using Partyline (see below) a message pops up informing you that mail has arrived at your MBX.

TALENT

The main heading for seven sections which cover the majority of subscribers' creative input into Compunet

HALL OF FAME represents a selection of the best of art on the net for three years – a sort of permament gallery. You can't UPLD or DNLD, it's only there for viewing. Hall Of Fame actually incorporates three of the Talent sections within three sub-divisions: (GOTO ATRH) – graphics, (GOTO MUSICH) – music, and demos (GOTO DEMOH). The 'exhibits' are changed by Compunet officials, who take contributions from the next three directories:

ART is a free netting space for subscribers who enjoy an artistic bent.

MUSIC is similarly a free area for funky bop made up by contributions from netters.

DEMOS acts as a combination of music and art – usually with a scrolly message – based around games or derived from pure inspiration. Subscribers are free to UPLD or DNLD any items from these last three sections.

ART AID speaks for itself, offering help with creating pictures for the Art Directory.

BIZ

A free-wheeling, newsy round up of Demo highlights compiled by Jason Firbank, Jane Firbank's brother.

HOTBED

Compunet's alternative comedy section hosted by the infinitely peculiar Dr Fogg of Whoooosh Laxatives Ltd. Offerings such as Breast Mounted Joysticks for the bored housewife illustrate the good Doctor's sense of humour. One of the oldest sections on the net.

PEOPLE

Fanatics corner with text input specially designed for clubs catering to interests such as Ice Hockey, Photography and Radio – at a random selection!. If you think the directory could do with another which appeals to you, you can always create your own.

COSMOS

A directory containing specialised interest subjects such as astronomy, science fiction, comics and the like. Very popular at the moment.

CHATLINE

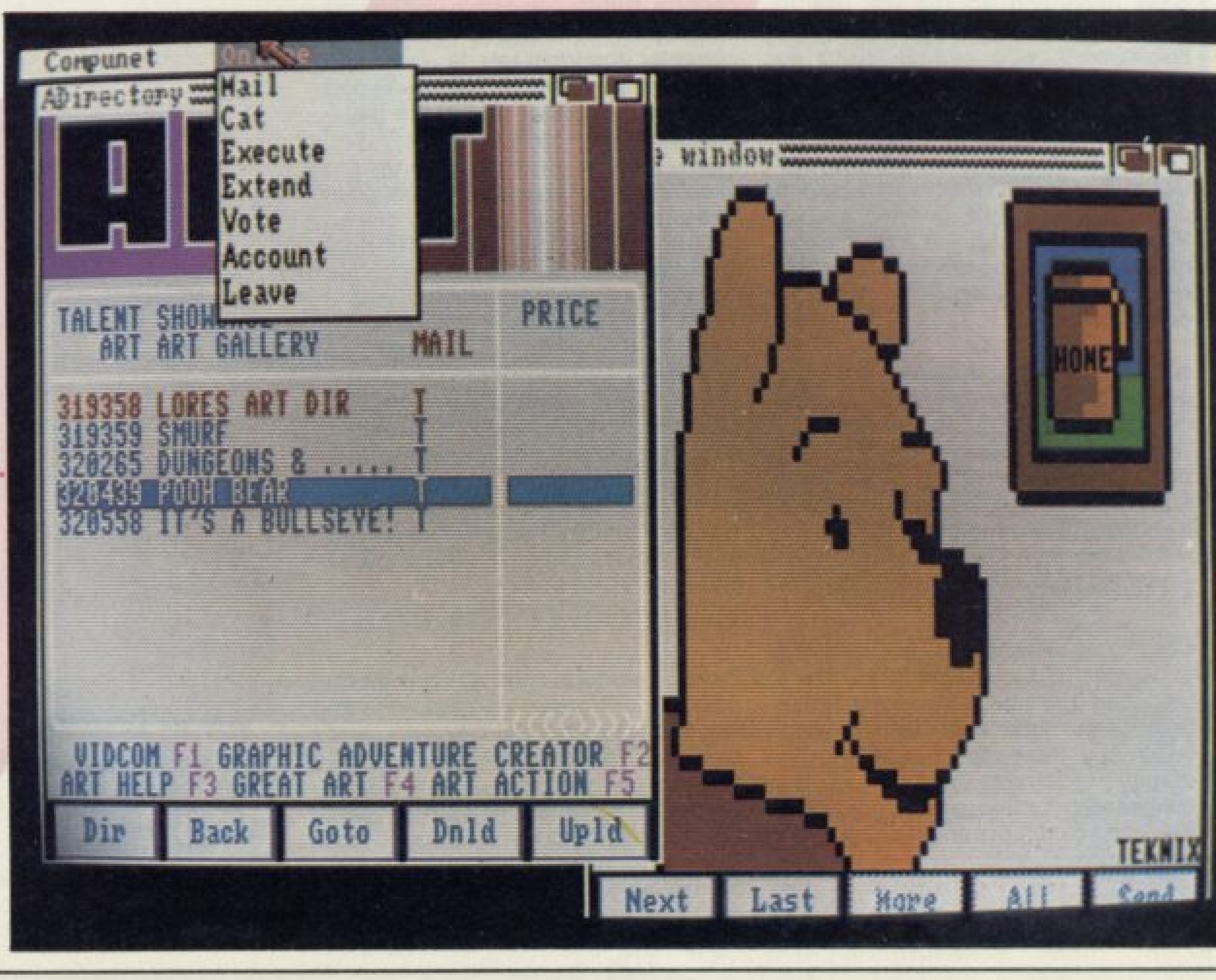
Chatline provides an example of Compunet democracy at work; netters vote with their fingers. Once a highly popular section in which text frames could be UPLDed so that other subscribers could respond, Chatline has lost many of its attractions as people have turned more to Partyline.

MULTI-USER GAMES

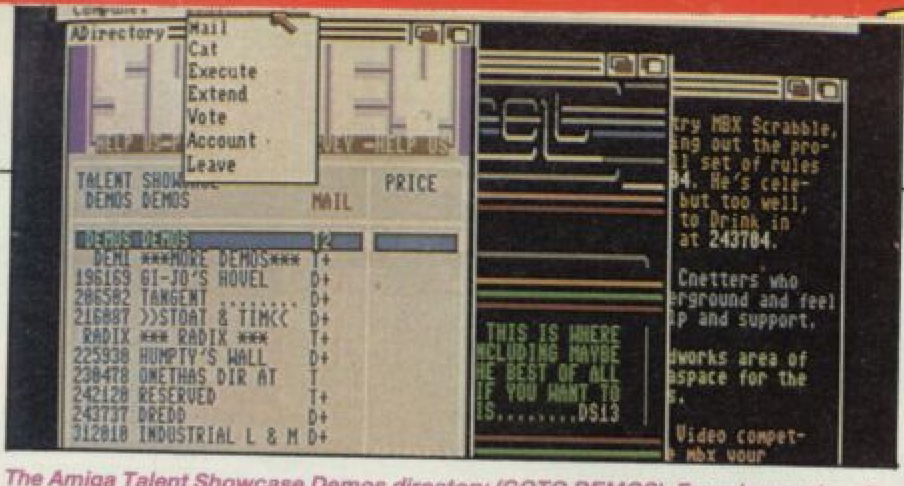
MUGs operate in a similar way to Partyline in that several people can use the system at the same time – this is interaction for real.

As I write, MUD, the famous Multi-User Dungeon game, is off the net for a while, but it should be fully functioning again by the time you read this.

A new MUG is also joining the ranks – called *Federation*. Written Alan Langton, Compunet's Manager, it's a 'economic' adventure which takes players around the universe exploring, hunting treasure and trading – and it will be on free-play for one week just to entice you. Currently being developed on Atari's Mega ST, THE GAMES MACHINE's Rob Steel should be bringing you a Compunet column full review soon.



(GOTO ART) – as displayed on the Amiga, while a slightly compressed low-res Pooh Bear looks on. The ONLINE pull-down menu gives access to options which normally scroll along the bottom line on the Commodore 64/128

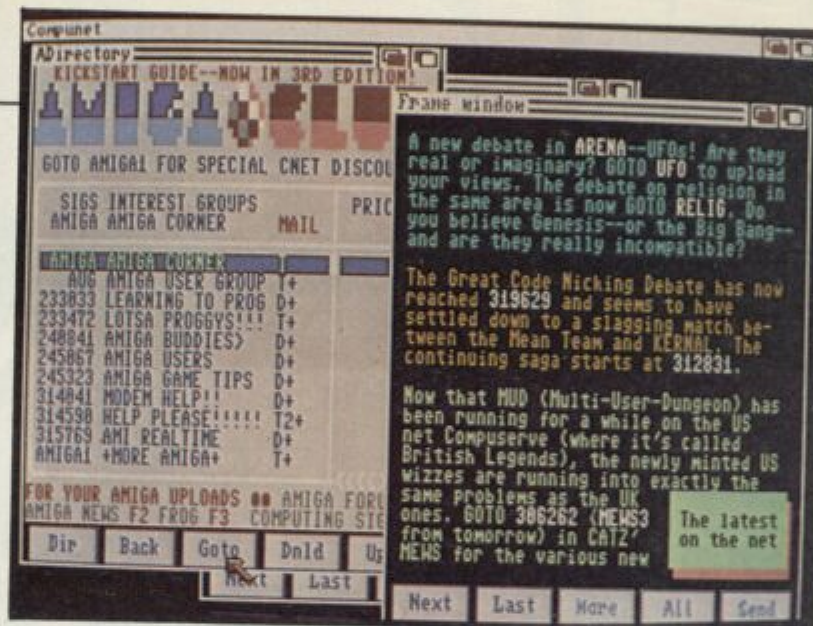


The Amiga Talent Showcase Demos directory (GOTO DEMOS). From here subscribers can access many demos from sub-directories. Beneath that is a text frame, overlaying the news

JUST UNVEILED!

GO ST and GO AMIGA

Two new sections for the specific machines. This really is your section to fill – and without your input Go Amiga (GOTO AMIGA) and Go ST (GOTO ST) could degenerate into an empty wilderness. However, to get things moving the Compunet crew have already put up some directories. There's an Amiga user group, programming hints, programs to DNLD and help with modems.



The Amiga Club directory (GOTO AMIGA) displayed on an Amiga with a text frame overlay of the latest from Jane Firbank's News files.

LET'S PARTY!

Partyline, (GOTO PARTY) installed on Compunet in early 1986, is an easy and enjoyable way to talk directly with other Compunet subscribers. The screen displays two windows, the lower used for typing in your messages while the larger one at the top acts as the main display area where the actual conversation appears.

When Partyline was first launched it was slow and lacked atmosphere. But over the years its response speed has improved, now there's no waiting time at all. But Partyline is more than a keyboard multi-user telephone, a fictional element has been added by the means of setting the action in a house. Yes, it's a real party in an imaginary home.

The party begins in the lobby of the house and from there extensions can be built in the form of rooms such as a toilet, bar or anything which takes your fancy – simply achieved by typing *ENTER followed by the name of the room you want to create. Eight rooms can be created with a maximum of eight users in each room; giving a theoretical total of 64 people all on line at the same time. It can get noisy!

PARTY POOPERS

Like any party you have to be careful with whom you mix. There can be a very varied selection of people partying at any one time, and, as in real life, there's a fair number of troublemakers who just come on and begin abusing people. Their favourite targets are programmers – especially the well-known ones, a lot of whom use the system – and people like myself. Sometimes they can combine their daggers: 'You! Your last game was RUBBISH and as for the TGM review, well . . . ' That kind of thing. And so it goes on until everyone ignores them. Luckily this doesn't take long.

It's not difficult to find people in the party house – typing *WHERE followed by their name reveals which room they are currently in. Or if you can't be bothered to go tramping after someone, you can use the command *CALL to give them a shout.

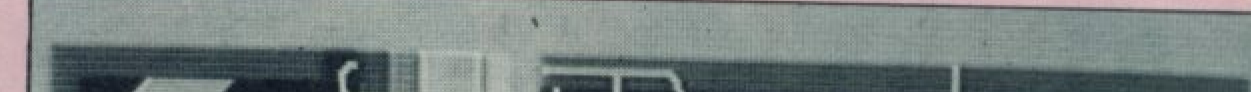
The front-end screen of Partyline before you actually go to the software and start chatting

PARTY PRINTOUT

If you want to keep records of who you've been chatting with (or insulting), a printout may come in quite handy. Approximately one hour's worth of partying can be stored up in the buffer and then dumped out to a printer using the PRINT command on the selection reel. If you can't wait for everything to be printed, it is possible to save a conversation out to disk in the form of an ASCII file. However, to do a printout from that afterwards you will need to run the file through a word processor first.

Keeping track of a conversation can be difficult depending on how many users are in the same room. By using the up cursor a third window appears at the top of the screen displaying roughly an hour's-worth of conversation.

Partyline costs £1 per hour to use, and in a strange way it is has the same disgracefully addictive powers as a TV soap opera. Just as you think it is about to log-off, in comes a new I-D and starts nattering away. And because the best parties don't start until late in the evening, there's a tendency to finally log-off by falling asleep at the keyboard.



THE CHAINSTORE MASSACRE





***Jack The Ripper* is the first computer game with an 18-certificate. In Germany and Australia many computer games, freely published in the United Kingdom, are banned for their violence. Are we going to have to go the same way? John Gilbert talks to cult horror novelist Shaun Hutson, among others, about the future of violent games.**

Mark Keaton's intestines gushed between the torn strands of his stomach. His body jerked and bucked against the hard floor. His mind roiled like white paper looping continuously against the black barrel of a typewriter's roller. In and out, black and white. The killer stood above him, a shuddering black outline, while the outstretched clever flashed a sharp picture of frozen steel through Keaton's dying eyes . . .

The body lies broken on the ground, its head bent back, the gash in its stomach red, a pool of blood on the dark floor beside it. The knife, eerie white in the blackness, juts towards the horribly scarred man who's widely distorted eyes seem to register the moment of his potential death . . .

Before you rush off in disgust and start to compose a long letter about the evils of such gore as contained in the two descriptions, stay your hand a while. They're included because they illustrate some points about censorship better than any diatribe could do, and they also pose some questions which I will endeavour to answer later.

Take the first scene. It is a slightly censored extract from one of the *Friday The 13th* movies. It is from two camera angles – the victim's and the killer's – and, more importantly, it shows detail and movement.

The second sequence is a description from a so-called horror computer game – of graphics, not text. It is static, so once the initial impression is over there's nothing else to come – no more shocks – and the graphics are distorted because of the comparatively low resolution.

The horror in this type of sequence is more implied than that of a film, but nevertheless it is still there. Movement on the parts of killer and victim are replaced by a greater degree of participation for the viewer/player who may be cast in the role of Victor Frankenstein or a thug killer in *Death Wish 3*.

Censors of computer software are, therefore, dealing with a different, cruder, medium than films or videos but they have a greater responsibility to the public because of the places in which the products may be bought – WH Smith, Boots, Woolworths – and the buying habits of the public. You may make an impulse buy of a computer game but going to see a film or taking out a video is a more regulated business. Cinema and video shop managers are more like publicans in their attitudes towards under-18s, but shop assistants have so far had no experience in dealing with X-rated products – cigarettes and porno magazines excluded.

Jack The Ripper, from CRL, caused such a furore last year because it was the first game to carry an 18 certificate from The British Board Of Film Censors. The dealers didn't know how to handle it, retailers were worried about the effects on customers while MPs, Mary Whitehouse and the 'if it's not Andy Pandy censor it' brigade had something new about which to complain.

BIRTH OF CENSORSHIP

To see how *Jack The Ripper* has started a new trend in computer software which could lead to the classification of all computer games, let's take a look at how the film, video and book media are controlled.

Jack was certified by The British Board Of Film Censorship because there is no general government censoring body – yet. The BBFC has no legal powers but was set up by the film industry, and any films which are not registered with a certificate do not go on release through the big distributors like Cannon EMI and ABC. As those companies have a virtual monopoly on cinemas in this country a film must be certified if it's to go out for big – or small-screen – showing.

"Friday The 13th was like any other game, player against the machine, and in most arcade games you've got to shoot something." - Mark Strachan, Domark

The same is not true in the United States. Movies over there are submitted to The Hays Office, named after its first president, Will Hays. The US's cinema industry is a much looser body than in Britain. There are more independent movie theatres, and, if you're offered nothing but an X-rating for your film, you can try to sell it to individual cinemas for general showing without fear of legal action. The audiences will, however, be small, and if you want to put a film out to general release you will have to cut, cut, cut, because the US censorship lobby at the Hays Office is stronger in its views than our liberal BBFC.

During the British censorship process a film is taken as a whole product with soundtrack, music and image linked. We also have the notion of artistic expression which the Hays Office doesn't.

The Hays Office takes a film apart, counts the number of swear words, the number of sex scenes and violent episodes and awards points against these black spots. For instance, you will score different points for different swear words, win more points for bondage rather than normal sex, and a note to cut an impaling whereas a stabbing may only get you an X-certificate.

The US censorship process seems so logical and statistical but your certificate can also depend on your prestige as a film maker. Certain sequences in Steven Spielberg's *Gremlins* should have made it an 18-equivalent in the US, but it was given a 15-equivalent. Similarly, Luke Skywalker's hand amputation in *The Empire Strikes Back* should have picked up an 18-equivalent. But, the people involved, Spielberg and Lucas – and the types of film these features were meant to be – made sure of the 15-equivalent.

Neither censorship body deals with books, plays or even computer software, but they will look at and classify any material which is thought to include violence against women or animals.

In late 1985 Clement Chambers,

PRESS ANY KEY

managing director of CRL, decided to have his first so-called horror computer game, *Dracula*, classified. It received a 15-certificate, as did the *Frankenstein* follow-up, but when the Board saw the script and screen shots for the *Jack The Ripper* game, it thought CRL had an 18-certificate product.

WITHIN THE LAW

Many members of the press dub Chambers efforts to get an 18-certificate as a cheap publicity stunt to drum up business and draw youngsters who will even break the law to see what's inside the gory packaging.

Clement, however, sees the deal differently: 'I only want to obey the law of the land. The British Board Of Film Censors is interested in all matters of censorship. Any game which shows mutilation, private parts, or private functions should be censored. *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* got 15-certificates while *Jack The Ripper* got an 18. If it had been in high resolution we might have had to cut it.

'We're only following statute and I think the real criminals are the people who wouldn't submit if they thought their product had mutilation in it and who think we're only doing it for cheap publicity.'

"Any game which shows mutilation, private parts, or private functions should be censored." - Clement Chambers, CRL





Gruesome images in CRL's Jack The Ripper resulted in its being given an 18-certificate

Chambers also believes there are some software products which should have been submitted for classification to the BBFC. 'The controversy started in the early Eighties with some sex games from a company called Silver Fox,' he says. 'Then Artic came along with *Ship Of Doom*, (a text adventure), where you could type in RAPE ANDROID and the game would respond. You had to know about that response before you could use it, but it was still there.

'There are hundreds of games on the market which could be classified. Take *Outrun* (the Christmas arcade smash from Ocean), there's a woman thrown out of the car in it.'

I asked Clement whether he'd had any trouble with retailers, particularly WH Smith, with the Ripper game. 'We've had no trouble with the shops. WH Smith are pleased that a piece of software has been taken so seriously.'

Now, that's odd, because shortly after my conversation with Clement it was time for the retailers to have their say. WH Smith, for instance, decided not to stock the game because of some of the screen shots – gory in the extreme – and certain passages in the text.

WH Smith's buyers have always been careful with games they feel are on the fringes of good taste, and rightly so. Their customer audience is wider than any of the other retail chains and independent retailers. Anything that is controversial is not allowed into the stores.

Boots has a similar moral policy and an even tougher line on technical excellence. The company also takes very few adventure games, favouring arcade and strategy simulations instead, so the Ripper censorship issue is not as hot for the company as it is for WH Smith.

Woolworths has not made a decision about *Jack The Ripper* because its stores stock only the top 20 chart hits and *Jack*, as an adventure game, is unlikely to make it to those heights.

Independent dealers, supplied by distributor Electronic Arts, have the most to worry about. During initial release Electronic Arts thought it was a game in line with *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* and sold it as such. The packaging looks harmless enough, but there is that 18-certificate displayed on the front – which is all that's required – and any independent retailer selling it to an under-18 could face a fine of £2,000.

CRL's next 'horror' release is *Wolfman*, which Chambers says is in line with the old film series. Jack The Ripper was never a monster in the old Universal horror film series. Maybe that's why the game stands out like a slit throat.

ARCADE VIOLENCE

Adventures are not the only games to have caused controversy during the past five years. Arcade games, and the packaging used to promote them, have had morally-outraged running for the Obscene Publications Bill – which has yet to be fully ratified by Parliament.

Veterans of the home computer world will no doubt remember Domark's *Friday The 13th* saga, while newer citizens may still be surprised at *Death Wish 3*, from Gremlin Graphics, but the first horror arcade games were produced in the United States three years ago.

A company called Wizard Video Games, from Los Angeles, bought the rights to *Halloween* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. The games, which were little more than stalk and slash in mazes, had very low resolution and were only available on cartridge for the Atari VCS games console and Sears Video Arcade. That did not stop angry parents berating the company for selling uncertified games to their children which contained links with two of the most notorious movies in US film history.

The packaging caused the most concern about the Wizard video games and the same held true when, a year after the US horror launch, Domark announced *Friday The 13th*. The arcade game, in which you have to stop mass killer Jason from hacking your high school buddies to bits, involved no on-screen gore. The computer graphics were lousy, but the packaging – which showed a bloody hockey mask with a knife through one eyehole – had computer magazines refusing to carry the ads or put the pic on their front covers (except CRASH). It also had the retail stores looking to their laurels.

"What I do object to is pornographic software, such as these stripper games." - Ian Stewart, Gremlin Graphics

Eventually WH Smith and Boots took the package without alteration but John Menzies was not so accommodating. Mark Strachan of Domark explained: 'We had to do a specially redesigned package for Menzies before they would take it.

'*Friday The 13th* was a reasonably non-violent game, after all you play the hero, not the killer. It was like any other game, player against the machine, and in most other arcade games you've got to shoot something.'

Domark is unlikely to do anything like *Friday The 13th* again, although Mark thinks the package, with its two blood capsules, was exciting. You can take a look for yourself as it is being rereleased as a budget package from Prism Leisure – minus the blood.

ARCADE SEX

Mark's also quick to give his views on computer censorship: 'I think shops shouldn't stock anything with an 18-certificate rather than having a separate shelf for it. But, I also think general censorship would be bad for the computer industry. It would be bad if 75 percent of the games released were banned.'

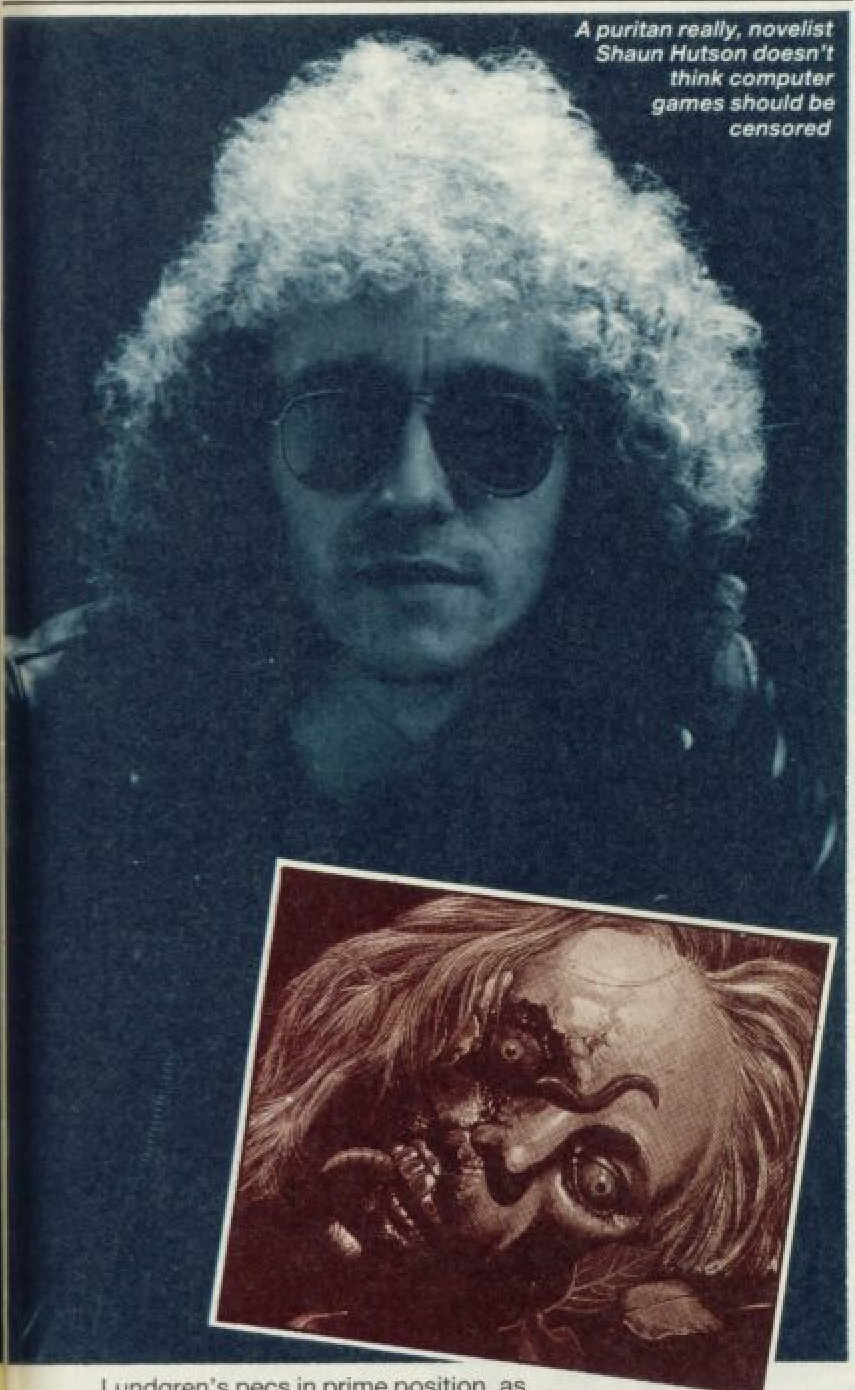
Ian Stewart of Gremlin Graphics holds a similar view, although he thinks that it should be up to the individual software house to draw its own boundaries of good taste. 'I think Clement's 18-certificate is just a cheap form of promotion. I mean, it has got everyone talking and writing about the game, and the magazines that give it editorial are giving it more exposure and playing straight into his hands. There's nothing wrong with that, though, it's all to do with marketing.'

Asked about *Death Wish 3*, which WH Smith and Boots *are* stocking, he replied: 'Yes, it is a bit gory, isn't it.' Ian is obviously referring to the little old ladies who you can bazooka into mounds of blood and the white-coated ambulance men who cart the lumps from the street and off the screen. But, he has no qualms about the game's UK or export sales. 'What I do object to is pornographic software, such as these stripper games.'

However, Ian also points out that sex is being used to sell products: 'With *Barbarian*, Palace is selling Maria Whittacker not the game, but that's what marketing's all about, and I only wish I'd thought of the idea first.'

The big companies, mastheaded by Ocean, have all used sex to sell during the past year – though, I must stress, not in the pornographic sense, so no lawsuits please. Ocean's *Game Over*, with its picture of the villainess and her nipple had artists at Newsfield running for their airbrushes and other magazines refusing to publish until thingies were covered up.

Gremlin is also using a covert sexual angle in its *Masters Of The Universe – The Movie*, with Dolph



A puritan really, novelist Shaun Hutson doesn't think computer games should be censored

The tasty cover of Shaun Hutson's Victims – a novel about a film special effects make-up man who finds a psycopath can better his creations using slaughtered human flesh . . .

Lundgren's pecs in prime position, as well as selling the macho image. But, as Ian Stewart so rightly says, it's all in a day's marketing.

OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS

When the latest Obscene Publications Act passes through Parliament such normal advertising practice as using nubile young women on ads, book jackets and in magazines will be called into question.

The act's aim is simple. To outlaw anything which is thought to be distasteful by a 'reasonable' person. The act will most surely affect computer games, such as *Jack The Ripper*, and *Sam Fox's Strip Poker*, but it could also be taken by the likes of Mary Whitehouse to remove all manner of products from shops. You may, for instance, never see another Stephen King book in WH Smith, not be able to by *Beverly Hills Cop II* over the counter because of the strip show and swearing scenes in it. The same goes for any other similar products which involve sex, death, or fighting. We could end up with a media like that of Australia a few years ago where even murder scenes were banned on TV, and you had to guess when a person disappeared from a film whether he had died or had just vanished.

" . . . if I had a kid of 15 I'm not sure I'd want him to see some of the things around. I'm fairly puritancial really." - Shaun Hutson, novelist

The censorship campaigners have had a wide platform on the media but, very often, those in the business of fantasy or horror production, in films, books, or computer games don't have their say. Maybe the attitude – as shown by the press towards Clement Chambers and *Jack The Ripper* – is that someone who creates fantastic horrors cannot be in favour of sensible censorship.

To test the case I went to meet Shaun Hutson, a horror writer who's been labelled The Grand Master Of Gore and The Emperor Of Excess, in London.

He's the archetypal Iron Maiden fan, with an incredible sense of humour – to rival Stephen King's – but a very logical outlook on life. His views on censorship are surprising for a 29-year-old who deals in mutilation during his work day: 'I do think there should be censorship in some form, maybe in films, but not in books. To be quite honest with you, if I had a kid of 15 I'm not sure I'd want him to see some of the things around. I mean, have you seen *The Untouchables*. I reckon that could have been an 18 without any problem. I'm fairly puritancial really.'

He is not, however, in favour of censoring computer games. 'With something like that you need a certain amount of intelligence to appreciate it, whereas with TV and film that interpretation is there whether you like it or not. So, I certainly wouldn't censor anything like that.'

AFTER THE MASSACRE

We passed on to the Hungerford and Bristol massacres and their rammifications on the *Rambo*-type films and their computer game conterparts. 'I feel very, very sorry. It was terrible what happened, but I just don't know how they can say it was because he watched *Rambo* or it was because he watched horror films. I'll tell you one of the most glaring examples about Hungerford. Three of the reasons given for the way that he (Ryan) was were that as a kid he read *Mein Kampf*, went to see *Judgement At Nuremburg* and liked horror films. I mean I did all those things as well.

'Hungerford was terrible but many people are just looking for excuses. I mean the first thing on the front page of *The Daily Mirror* today was 'There was a startling similarity between this (the Bristol killings) and Hungerford – he liked *Rambo* films'.'

We then talked about the definitions of horror and thriller fiction where there seems to be a case that the moral brigade are looking in the wrong direction as to what they should censor. Horror media seek to unsettle, scare and often repulse. Where's the killing impulse there? – unless a player already has an attraction towards mutilated corpses and goes to the seamier side of horror to try and fulfill his baser instincts.

Psychologically, the thrill-a-minute gun-toting games where the only mission is to kill, kill, kill are the most likely to prove harmful, and look at some of the titles that are included in that category. *Rambo*, *Miami Vice*, *Gunboat*, and *Renegade*.

As Shaun Hutson sees it the fascination with horror and fantasy in computer games is based on a need for the unknown and for new, unnatural experiences, as far as the 'ordinary' player is concerned. We should, rather, be concerned with the potential murderers who seek out such games because of a need to be satiated. 'Some people may find something disgusting while some people may laugh. A classic example is somebody who falls down the stairs. Now, you know people who're going to laugh, while someone else'll think 'poor sod' and go over to see if they're alright.'

THE FUTURE PROPOSES

So, it's all a matter of personal reaction rather than some innate evil within a computer game. Many would agree, many not care, while others would start to argue against all forms of violence in entertainment and the media. But, what's worse, a dead body in a thriller or the blood spattered bodies we're constantly shown on the news but no one complains about because they're real?

The questions will go on forever, as will the permutations of answers, but someone will have to decide eventually on some form of action as computer games become more realistic.

Three workable systems of censorship were put to me by members of the software industry, while I was preparing this article. The first suggestion is in line with the top shelves of newsagents and video shops: put all the contentious games – not necessarily the 18-rated ones – on a separate shelf behind the counter. That puts the onus on the shop assistant.

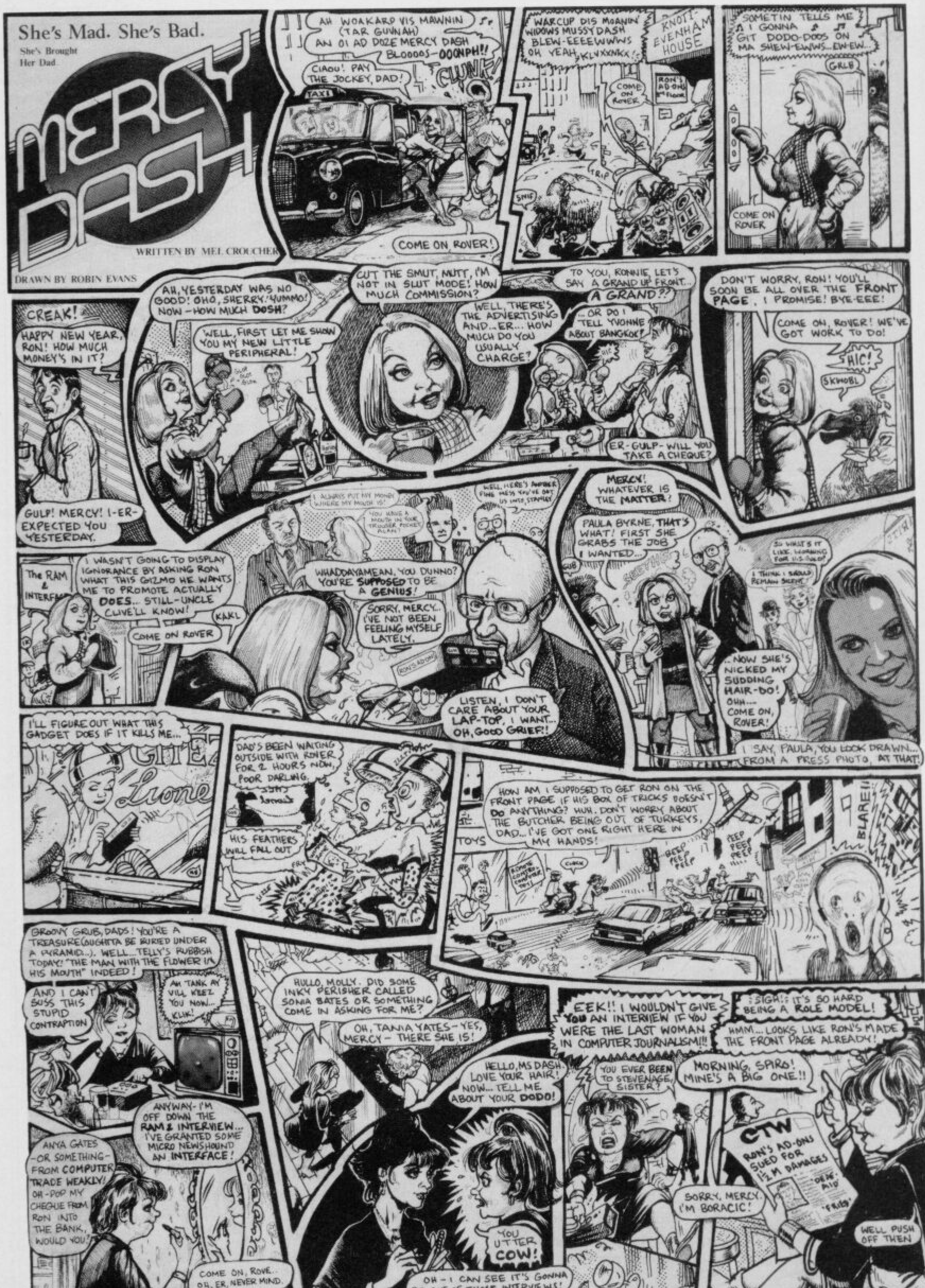
Alternatively, you could classify all computer games through a software review body, but that's something none of the people I talked to want.

Finally, you could ban all pornographic, horror or gore-related games from shops, or perhaps relegate them to places such as video hire shops where the counter staff are – usually – expert at dealing with under-agers.

From the views expressed from 'the ban', 'don't ban' and 'don't care camps', the answer may lie somewhere between the suggested solutions, with some form of censorship – reliant on producer and retailer. The system appears to be forming well enough, with the careful watchdog eyes of WH Smith and Boots on the lookout for anything distasteful – though, no doubt the censorists will want more.

Let me leave you with two pieces of information, both of which I hope will encourage a considered and constructive response from you. In Germany computer game violence is banned, as are other forms of fictional media violence. The same is true of Australia and the British government wants a similar form of legislation in the UK.

Since the placement of those acts the violent crime rates of both countries have shown no significant decline.


She's Mad. She's Bad.
She's Brought Her Dad
MERCY DASH
WRITTEN BY MEL CROUCHER
DRAWN BY ROBIN EVANS
AH WOAKARD VIS MAWNIN (TAR GUVNAH) AN OI AD DOZE MERCY DASH BLOOOOS—OOOPH!!
CIAOU! PAY THE JOCKEY, DAD!
CLUNK!
TAXI
COME ON ROVER!
WARCUP DIS MOANIN' WIDOWS MUSSY DASH BLEW-EEEEWWWS OH YEAH KLVXXNKX!
KNOTT-EVENHAM HOUSE
COME ON ROVER
RON'S AD-ONS
TRIP
SMIF
SOMETIN TELLS ME I GONNA GIT DODO-DOOS ON MA SHEW-EWWS...EW-EW...
GRLB
COME ON ROVER
CREAK!
HAPPY NEW YEAR, RON! HOW MUCH MONEY'S IN IT?
GULP! MERCY! I-ER-EXPECTED YOU YESTERDAY.
AH, YESTERDAY WAS NO GOOD! OHO, SHERRY. YUMMO! NOW—HOW MUCH DOSH?
WELL, FIRST LET ME SHOW YOU MY NEW LITTLE PERIPHERAL!
CUT THE SMUT, MUTT, I'M NOT IN SLUT MODE! HOW MUCH COMMISSION?
WELL, THERE'S THE ADVERTISING AND...ER...HOW MUCH DO YOU USUALLY CHARGE?
TO YOU, RONNIE, LET'S SAY A GRAND UP FRONT...
A GRAND?!
...OR DO I TELL YVONNE ABOUT BANGKOK?
ER-GULP-WILL YOU TAKE A CHEQUE?
DON'T WORRY, RON! YOU'LL SOON BE ALL OVER THE FRONT PAGE. I PROMISE! BYE-EEE!
COME ON, ROVER! WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO!
HIC!
SKWOBL
The RAM & INTERFACE
I WASN'T GOING TO DISPLAY IGNORANCE BY ASKING RON WHAT THIS GIZMO HE WANTS ME TO PROMOTE ACTUALLY DOES... STILL—UNCLE CLIVE'LL KNOW!
COME ON ROVER
KAKL
I ALWAYS PUT MY MONEY WHERE MY MOUTH IS!
YOU HAVE A MOUTH IN YOUR TROUSER POCKET, ALAN!
WELL, HERE'S ANOTHER FINE MESS YOU'VE GOT US INTO, STANLEY
WHADDAYAMEAN, YOU DUNNO? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A GENIUS!
SORRY, MERCY... I'VE NOT BEEN FEELING MYSELF LATELY.
RON'S AD-ONS
LISTEN, I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR LAP-TOP, I WANT... OH, GOOD GRIEF!
MERCY! WHATEVER IS THE MATTER?
PAULA BYRNE, THAT'S WHAT! FIRST SHE GRABS THE JOB I WANTED...
...NOW SHE'S NICKED MY SUDDING HAIR-DO! OHH... COME ON, ROVER!
I SAY, PAULA, YOU LOOK DRAWN... FROM A PRESS PHOTO, AT THAT!
I'LL FIGURE OUT WHAT THIS GADGET DOES IF IT KILLS ME...
DAD'S BEEN WAITING OUTSIDE WITH ROVER FOR 2 HOURS NOW, POOR DARLING.
HIS FEATHERS WILL FALL OUT.
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET RON ON THE FRONT PAGE IF HIS BOX OF TRICKS DOESN'T DO ANYTHING? HUH. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE BUTCHER BEING OUT OF TURKEYS, DAD... I'VE GOT ONE RIGHT HERE IN MY HANDS!
TOYS
BEEP BEEP BEEP
PEEP PEEP PEEP
BLARE!
GROOVY GRUB, DADS! YOU'RE A TREASURE (OUGHTTA BE BURIED UNDER A PYRAMID...). WELL... TELLY'S RUBBISH TODAY! "THE MAN WITH THE FLOWER IN HIS MOUTH" INDEED!
AND I CAN'T SUSS THIS STUPID CONTRAPTION
AH TANK AY VILL KEEZ YOU NOW... KLIK!
HULLO, MOLLY. DID SOME INKY PERISHER CALLED SONIA BATES OR SOMETHING COME IN ASKING FOR ME?
OH, TANIA YATES—YES, MERCY—THERE SHE IS!
EEK!! I WOULDN'T GIVE YOU AN INTERVIEW IF YOU WERE THE LAST WOMAN IN COMPUTER JOURNALISM!!!
:SIGH: IT'S SO HARD BEING A ROLE MODEL!
HMM... LOOKS LIKE RON'S MADE THE FRONT PAGE ALREADY!
ANYWAY—I'M OFF DOWN THE RAM & INTERVIEW... I'VE GRANTED SOME MICRO NEWSHOUND AN INTERFACE!
ANYA GATES—OR SOMETHING—FROM COMPUTER TRADE WEAKLY! OH—POP MY CHEQUE FROM RON INTO THE BANK, WOULD YOU?
HELLO, MS DASH. LOVE YOUR HAIR! NOW... TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DODO!
YOU UTTER COW!
COME ON, ROVE.. OH, ER, NEVER MIND.
OH—I CAN SEE IT'S GONNA BE ONE OF THOSE INTERVIEWS!
YOU EVER BEEN TO STEVENAGE, SISTER?
SORRY, MERCY. I'M BORACIC!
MORNING, SPIRO! MINE'S A BIG ONE!!
CTW
RON'S AD-ONS SUED FOR 1½M DAMAGES
WELL PUSH OFF THEN

WEENY MEANIE MIDI MODE

(multi-track home recording)

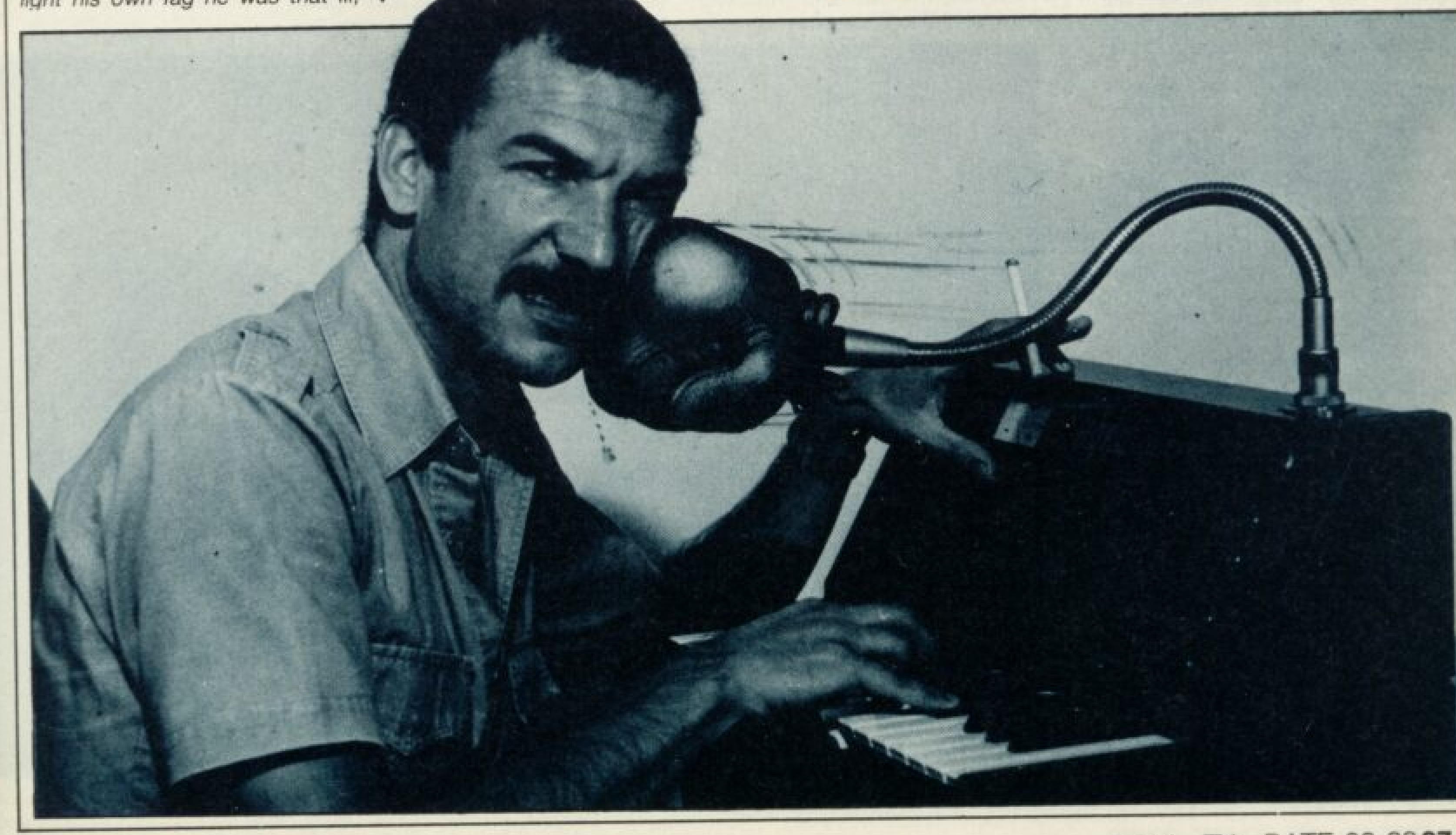
Man of many parts (most of them purchased second-hand), Mel Croucher complements the efforts of Jon Bates by sampling some budget recording machines

Many years ago, in a galaxy far away, after he had shed his rocker's leather but before he had grown his hippy innocence, a young Mel Croucher first blundered into the recording studios; whether it was by good judgement or unbelievable ignorance, Mel got involved with the likes of **PAUL SIMON**: *'I paid him fifteen quid for a two-hour session in 1964, he was crap,'* **PINK FLOYD:** *'we were all student architects, when Syd Barratt did his pastoral bit, the Teds began chucking beer glasses,'* **IAN DURY**: *'he used to go for physiotherapy with my friend's Mum. During 'Deus' he couldn't even light his own fag he was that ill,'* **T REX**: *'Mark Bolan just sat there, cross legged, with snot pouring out of his nose, trying to read a poem about his dick,'* AND THE LEGENDARY **ALEXIS KORNER**: *'he knew all there was to know about music, that's why I lasted about an hour and a half as a bass player.'*

After 25 years in the music business you would have thought that a sane man would have given up, but while he's still fending off senility (just), we decided to tap his recording experience. the only condition is that he sticks to home cassette recording, and gets the whole lot down on the one side of a C-30! take it away Mel . . .

Fifteen minutes? No problem! Are we on? Right then, 'The Definitive Guide To Multi-track Home Recording', what's the price limit? £500, are you kidding? – you don't have to spend half that. Do you know that MICHELLE SHOCKED laid her first album down on a Walkman! Do you know that DAVE STEWART recorded the whole of the first Eurythmics on a three hundred quid Teac Portastudio? What I'm saying is that anyone can produce an acceptable demo cassette in the piracy of their own bedroom. Is this for THE GAMES MACHINE, yes? Well that's a good start, the reader is going to be intelligent, articulate and have access to some sort of micro, so the chances are that anyone who reads this will know how to link up their computer to a MIDI or a Casio keyboard or a Sooty Xylophone, some might even be able to sing a bit, or play guitar.

First write your thrash metal anthem, or your radio jingle, or symphony, or answerphone message, whatever it is you're into, then choose the correct father; someone with the surname Wilde or Lennon should do. Finally cut your music down to the bare minimum, you can always ponce it up afterwards. When you're testing your recorder for sound level please don't say 'One,



Mel Croucher taking no nonsense from a Vocoder

Two . . . ', that's what the roadies do just to make sure they've plugged the amps in. A test recommended by the BBC is the phrase, 'Papa had cornflakes for breakfast'. This lets you hear if your Ps are popping, Fs are effing and so on. (Actually, Barry Norman taught me that, but one so hates to be a name dropper, doesn't one).

Start me at the cheapest end of the market and work up to your price limit; above that you would do well to read the specialist magazines like *Home And Studio Recording* and comb the small ads in the music press and *Exchange & Mart* – they're full of more advanced gear at knock-down prices from people that are upgrading to open-reel machines and digitals. OK, what's the first one?

STUDIOMAN (£39)

This is a poxy little machine by Turnkey; about the size of a small packet of tampons, with about the same dynamic range. Lay your rhythm and melodic tracks down on your computer, or into your keyboard memory, or record it on your Walkman, and feed it into the Studioman, which mixes the input with a 'live' track of you singing in the bath or force feeding the budgie your sax. The bath tub bit can be faked up on the Studioman, as it has a very basic reverb unit built into it. I don't recommend that you use it for synthetic inputs, but it enhances a flat voice very nicely. When you're happy with the mix, lay your master tape down on your cassette recorder.

PERSONAL STUDIO (£40)

Voice Over's Walkman-sized answer to the Studioman, with a very similar spec, except the reverb/echo sounds more realistic to my waxy ears. All these cheapo machines do is to provide the sort of ping-pong effect that certain tape recorders have built-in. You build up tracks by bouncing a mix and adding to the result time after time. Trouble is every time you bounce, your earlier tracks will degrade and the tape hiss will build up. That's what I mean about keeping your ideas to a minimum.

POCKET STUDIO (Arbiter £99)

I don't really see the purpose of this machine. It's simply a Studioman with a cassette recorder glued to it. If you're going to spend a hundred quid you may as well buy a half-decent mixer/fader and a cheap Walkman and plug them into your existing cassette player. That would give you much more flexibility. You can get some excellent echo effects and phasing just by rerecording your music alongside itself, with a slight delay between the two tracks. The pocket studio is a compromise machine. I don't like compromises.

VESTAFIRE MR-30 (£225)

Aaah! Take it away! Pass me the garlic! This is the cheapest 4-track on the market as far as I know, and it's about as useful as a chocolate kettle. There's some sort of a fixed routing system which . . . nah, don't bother, get it out of here!

FOSTEX X-15 (£299)

Great! The ZX Spectrum of 4-track recording, make that the ZX-81, you can play football with it and it will work, (the last sentence is not applicable under the Trades Description Act). An inspired piece of kit, see, about the size of a paperback book, battery-powered and a doddle to use. Remember those Grafpads you used to get for jotting down pixel graphics? It's like that, an instant musical notepad. You can only use two of the mixer inputs at a time, but the quality is superb, not bad for a Dolby-B. Definitely my best buy for under three hundred quid, and because they're so robust, second-hand cheapos are not to be missed.

VESTAFIRE MR-10 (£320)

Hmm. This one does everything that the X-15 can do, and it has stereo inputs for a CD player, or record deck, but golly, I mean, that might encourage people to sample copyright material! I suppose it's useful if you've got these prerecorded backing tracks, and you want to add your own stuff over the top, but I don't see the fun in that, and besides, you may as well use a far cheaper system. No, I'll stick with the Fostex X-15.

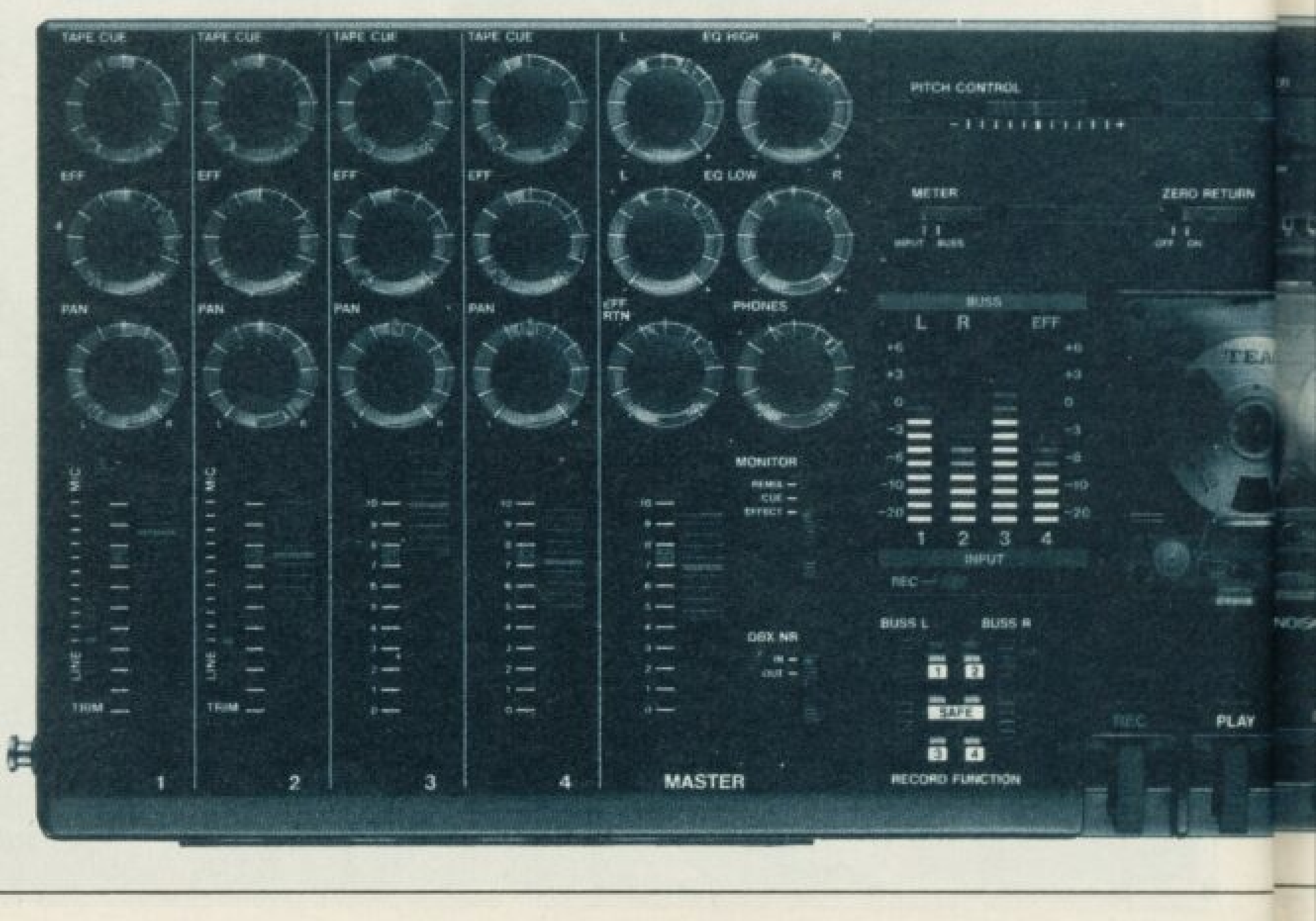
TEAC PORTA 05 (Tascam, £329)

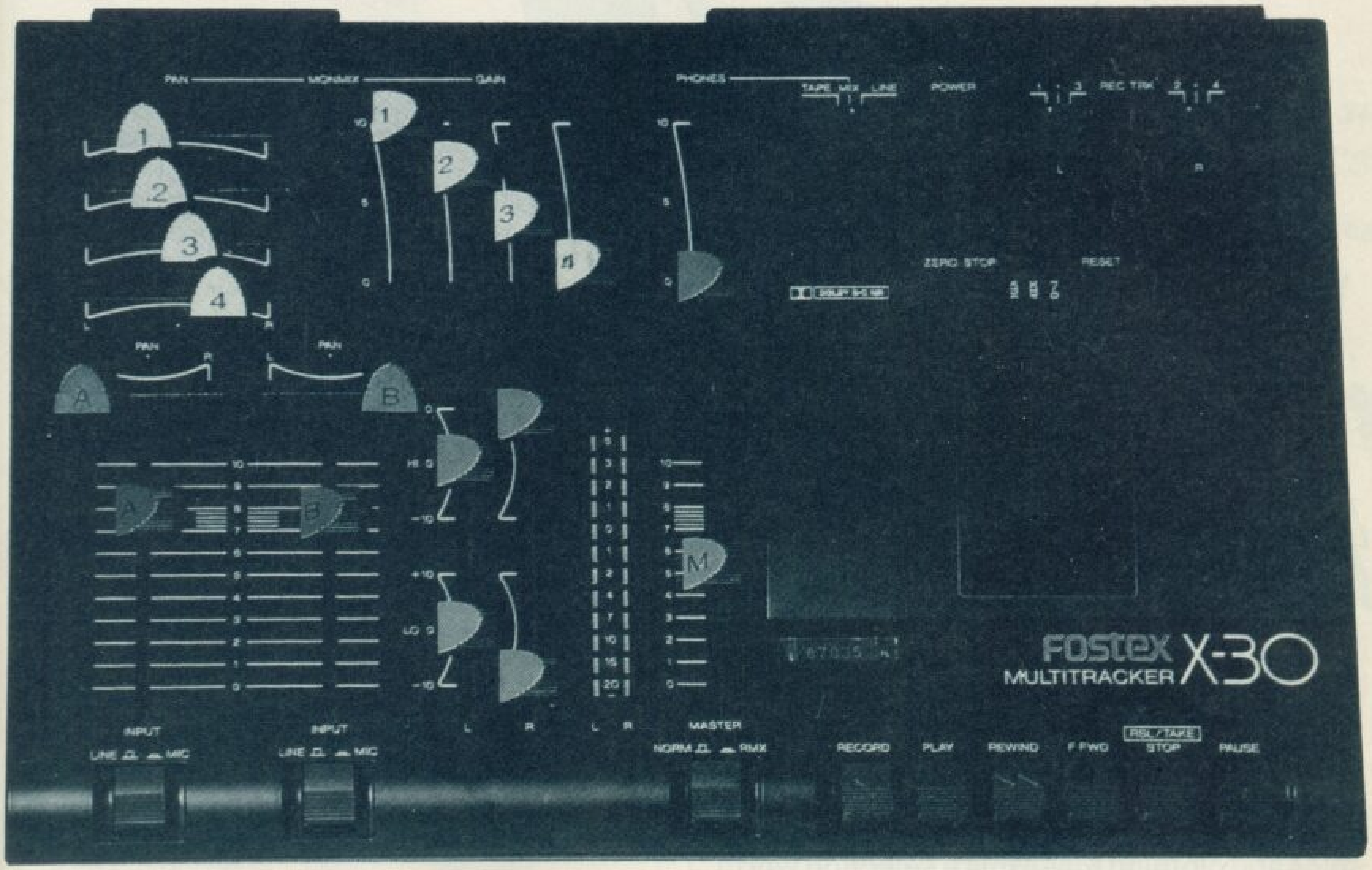
I used to have a mobile toilet called a Porta-05, when I lived in a caravan, but don't let that put you off. Tascam machines are bloody marvellous! They invented the portable studio as far as I'm concerned. The main thing about this 4-track model is that it can play standard cassettes, I mean at normal speed and with a traditional stereo format. With most other portables of this standard you get one-side-only recording, that is to say all four tracks banged down in the same direction, and the cassette flashing through at double speed. If you're into MIDI, this has got to be the one, the synchronisation is as near as you can get to error-free, and they've included a DBX noise reduction unit. Some people will tell you that DBX mucks up your computer's sync code, but I've never found that a problem as long as you record your MIDI signals completely flat. Leave all your tone and effects controls set to zero. On this machine they've solved the problem by including a special sync socket, and all the garbage frequencies that normally confuse your computer get filtered out. What's more, each of the four channels has got its own effects control, so you can start up each track at any stage in the recording, and not just when you are ready to master. The dinky little LED console is practically idiot-proof. Yeah, if I had to choose a machine for my desert island, this would be it.

POSTEX X-30 (£340)

I've got a Fostex 8-track system at home, for my demos, and I love it, so I have to admit that I was disappointed with the sound quality of this 4-track, especially as it weighs in as more expensive than the Tascam. I have an idea that the designers went in for style over content with this one. Just look at it! Horrible! Control knobs like some sort of an art deco suspender belt, and the way the panning controls are laid out is crap compared with the Tascam. Also it only works at standard speed, so you immediately lose a lot of quality there, and biggest crime of all is that you can only record two tracks at a time. Well, that's fine if you're playing with yourself behind locked doors, but if you are part of a string quartet, two of you are going to have to fake it up. In other words, it's useless for live recordings. On the plus side, banging in FSK time codes can be done via a Sync input, here in the backside. The manual is really terrible about this, but I think it means that you lose everything on track Four for the privilege of communicating with your computer. Finally, no battery option, only a mains adaptor, which is stupid for anyone who's ever tried to record in a garage without a power point, or in the street to get some sound effects. In a word, 'shove it'.

" . . . chances are that anyone who reads this will know how to link up their computer to a MIDI . . . "





" . . . don't expect to be able to afford to go digital for a long time yet."

TECZON 4X4 (£439)

A pig of a machine. Horrible to look at, and the tracks are permanently routed, like Input Two always goes to Track two, and so on. This sort of thing went out with the ark. It only runs at the standard speed, but it's got Dolby C, and the sound isn't bad at all. Teczon are revamping it, and it will weigh in at about £479, maybe they will provide a blindfold so you don't have to look at the revolting layout.

TEAC PORTA-ONE (Tascam, £499)

The only advantage that I have found with this one, over its little brother the Porta-05 is that you have a separate Eq for each channel. This means that you can record your MIDI (or FSK or SMPTE) sync pulses flat onto your first track, and then your computer-generated sound, or drum machine or synth can automatically sync up while you're still fiddling about with the arrangements before you record a thing, but with all the tone and effects modulation in place. So what you hear is what you master. My biggest criticism is that the Vu-meters are very slow to respond. The 05's little pillars of light are instantaneous.

How much tape have we got left? 30 seconds? Alright, to sum up: if you are serious about interfacing with your computer as a MIDI controller, the TASCAM PORTA-05 is the one. The data filter gives absolutely error-free synchronisation, even when you use the pitch control to about plus or minus 15%. The sound quality is as good as you are going to get without spending an absolute fortune. Unlike most hardware, you won't have to keep hanging on for prices to fall, and new technology to supercede everything you've got after a few months. This is state-of-the-art-stuff for the next few years. The digital machines are coming in now. AKAI are launching a fantastic 12-track in about three months time, based on the Video-8 format, and expandable up to 36 tracks, but don't expect to be able to afford to go digital for a long time yet. Finally, here's how to get your demo tape published, and into the charts. All you have to do is . . .

(Unfortunately we ran out of tape at this point)



MACHINE	MANUFACTURER	PRICE	SOUND QUALITIES	EASE OF USE	VALUE FOR MONEY
Studioman	Turnkey	£39	★	★★	★★
Personal Studio	Voice Over	£40	★★	★★	★★
Pocket Studio	Arbiter	£99	★	★★	★
MR-30	VestaFire	£225	★★	★	★
X-15	Fostex	£299	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
MR-10	Vestafire	£320	★★★	★★★	★★★
Porta-05	Tascam	£329	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
X-30	Fostex	£340	★★★★	★★	★★★
4 X 4	Teczon	£439	★★★★	★	★★
Porta-One	Tascam	£449	★★★★	★★★	★★★

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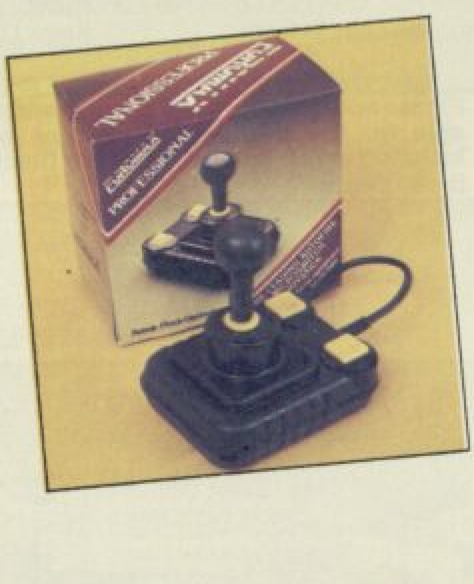


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Garfield *(The Edge)*
Jinxter *(Rainbird)*
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CYBORGS AND ANDROIDS IN VIDEO

In the last of their articles starring computer technology in film, Martyn Lester and Martin Coxhead don sterile gloves for some gory bio-micro-chip surgery.

This month we look at both cyborgs and androids in movies and on video, and again some definitions have to be established. For our purposes an android is a purely robotic creation which is meant to pass as a human, while a cyborg is part-organic and part-mechanical. The Oxford English Dictionary might not agree, but we're writing this – so there!



ROBOCOP

The cyborg idea forms the basis of the current international box-office hit, Paul Verhoven's *Robocop* – a violent, thrilling and often blackly funny look at law enforcement in the future. Directed with an eye for violent action and stylish design, the plot is set at the turn of the century, where the Detroit police force is about to come under private owenership. The first plan is to have hulking robots, codenamed ED-209, as the police on the streets, but the idea gets put on a back burner after a prototype blasts one of the multi-national's executives to death while malfunctioning.

The alternative plan is used: to encase what is left of a wounded officer in an armoured mechanical suit, computers interfacing with what is left of his pared-down brain. When a young cop called Murphy (Peter Weller – also seen in the excellent and off-beat *The Adventures Of Buckaroo Banzai*) is blown to bits by a gang of cop-killers, it is the perfect opportunity to try out the Robocop project.

The movie is truly entertaining, while offering some witty asides about the perceived society of the future. Two ex-Presidents are killed when an orbiting peace platform goes berserk and strafes Santa Barbara with lasers, and the TV commercials of the future offer the latest in mechanical replacement hearts, including a Yamaha sports model.

On a technical level the film is exemplary, from the Rob Bottin-designed Robocop armour to Phil Tippett's stop-motion animation of the ED-209 robots. Director Verhoven throws in advanced technology subtly, rather than making it too upfront. CD Video is used to deliver a death threat via an assassin, who happens to tote a hand grenade with an inset LCD timer.

The performances also work, including Nancy Allen as Murphy's ex-partner, who realises just who it is under the metallic helmet, and Weller himself, slowly regaining his memory and trying to re-establish his own humanity. In all, and understandably a smash, although the violence is sometimes truly upsetting.

TERMINATE FOR THE FUTURE

Ever mindful to spot a trend, Italian producer Fabrizio De Angelis, maker of the Bronx Warriors movies, is currently preparing *Cy-Warriors: Special Combat Force*, which he admits to be a Robocop imitation.

Rather less humane than Weller's Murphy was Arnold Schwartzenegger in another cyborg hit of a couple of years back – *The Terminator* **(Rank Video)**, a clever and breakneck SF tale directed by James Cameron, who went on to direct *Aliens* **(CBS/Fox Video)**.

Cameron's plot broke the accepted rules of time-travel by having a cyborg travel from a future time where robots rule in order to kill the woman whose son, should he be born, would lead the uprising against the robotic dictators. If you think about it long enough there's a definite flaw in there somewhere.

A soldier from the future in the form of Michael Biehn follows Big Arnie back to 1986 in order to save the woman – played by Linda Hamilton – but the battle against the seemingly indestructable future warrior is a tough one.

Again pace and action carried the film through the gaps in the logic of the script, and running jokes with the Terminator's computerised, data-filled point-of-view (ie written VDU-style options superimposed over his own visual images of his surroundings) and his running repairs to himself added the levity the movie needed.

Interestingly Stan Winston's running repair special effects were repeated almost shot for shot by Italian technician Sergio Stivaletti in *Fists Of Steel* **(Vestron Video)**. a surprisingly intelligent little tale known in some countries as *Atomic Cyborg*.

Here Daniel Green played the cyborg, Paco Quertak, created for a

political assassination, but who goes haywire. Director Martin Dolman (Sergio De Martino) raised some interesting ideas about a cyborg's identity (would it remember its human origins?) before settling for a final laser shoot-'em-up.

De Martino, again under his Dolman disguise, all offered us the odd cyborg or two in his extravagantly named *2019 – After The Fall Of New York* **(VTC Video)** a post-apocalypse thriller with a lone fighter called Parsifal (Michael Sopkir) fighting a cyborg regime in order to find the last fertile woman on Earth. Still, it was fun . . .



STAR WARS

VILLAINS AND HEROES

Cyborgs in the movies usually turn out to be untrustworthy. Take your eyes off them for a moment and they'll defect.

Action star Robert Ginty finds this to his cost when terrorist Sandhal Bergman is reconstructed with robot parts in *Retaliator* **(Imperial)**. Saved from the dead in order to work for the power of good, she soon turns out to be even meaner than ever.

Occasionally they see the light, as in *The Humanoid* **(RCA/Columbia)** where Bond movie star Richard Keil is a space pilot, robotised by the baddies, who switches to the aid of a little lad and his dog.

Wes Craven, director of the excellent *Nightmare On Elm Street* **(CBS/Fox Video)**, rather blotted his copybook with *Deadly Friend* **(Warner Home Video)**, a limp tale of a boy genius reviving his dead girlfriend with a robotic brain implant in order that she can get revenge on the father who abused her.

Apart from the fact that she looks like an extra from *Night Of The Living Dead*, nobody seems to notice anything different about her. Occasionally hilariously inept, the film proves that Craven should stick to the Elm Street vicinity and not dabble in semi-necrophilic teen-love stories.

Michael Ironside made a memorable villain in *Spacehunter* **(RCA/Columbia)**, playing Overdog McNab, a cyborg pitched against the heroic Peter Strauss. McNab was virtually a prisoner in a large metalic web of hoses and pipes, but Ironside's snarling presence was memorable as was David Warner as The Evil One in *Time Bandits* **(Thorn EMI Video)**, the Devil in disguise, and having such handy qualities as whirling blades which emerged from his head . . .

Other cyborg oddities have included Ming The Merciless's minions in the Dino De Laurentiis version of *Flash Gordon* **(Thorn EMI)**, Michael Rennie in the very low-budget *Cyborg 2069*, Katherine Ross and the secret of Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* **(VCL Video)** and the lead character in the hit *D.A.R.Y.L.* **(RCA/Columbia)**, the acronym standing for Data Analysing Robotic Youth Lifeform. Here a young boy with amnesia astounds his foster parents and friends with his strange abilities – he turns out to have a computer for a brain. Scientists are looking for their lost creation to dissect him, but Daryl has developed into a virtual human.

Even Darth Vader of the *Star Wars* series **(CBS/Fox Video)** was a cyborg, being hooked into that curious breathing apparatus.

CHEAPOBORGS

Low-budget king Roger Corman introduced a few man/machine combinations into his enjoyable *Battle Beyond The Stars* **(Warner Home Video)** while the heir apparent to his throne, Charles Band, has had a few brushes with the subject in several of his Empire and Wizard productions. The best was the very entertaining *Eliminators* **(Entertainment In Video)**, in which Patrick Reynolds gave a very good performance as the Mandroid, a man/machine, heavily armed and complete with a tank track base should the going get rough.

He escapes from mad scientist Roy Dotrice and with three companions – a scientist (Denise Crosby from *Star Trek – The Next Generation*), an adventurer (Andrew Prine coming over like a low-life Indiana Jones) and a Ninja (Conan Lee . . . honest) – and they set out to stop Dotrice's mad scheme. Very much live-action comic book, it's a delight – highly recommended.



TERMINATOR

. . . the Terminator's computerised, data-filled point-of-view added the levity the movie needed.

A villainous cyborg also featured in *Metalstorm – The Destruction Of Jared Syn* **(Entertainment In Video)**, a space opera directed by Band himself, which was bearable in cinema 3-D but just mundane in 2-D video. Although called mutants, cyborgs were the villain in *Mutant Hunt* **(Entertainment In Video)** from Band's subsidiary Wizard Productions. Some good Ed French 'melting' effects aside, it was dross.

Sounding interesting is *Robojox*, believed to be Band's biggest-budgeted production yet (which may not be saying much), which shows a time when wars are fought by having each nation's supreme champions battle each other in massive *Transformer*-style robots, controlled from within.

Although it has been completed for some time now, *Robojox* has yet to be released anywhere in the world, but the direction presence of Stuart Gordon (maker of *Re-animator*, *From Beyond* and *Dolls*) is reassuring.

Possibly the most imaginative idea of organic/ mechanical mayhem came in the Dutch thriller The Lift.

Possibly the most imaginative idea of organic/mechanical mayhem came in the Dutch thriller *The Lift* **(Warner Home Video)**, where the menace was an office block lift that seemingly had a mind of its own, trapping and suffocating passengers and luring blind men down the shaft. Director Dick Maas resolved the tale by having the fiend exposed as organic memory chips in the lift's control system which had developed a form of intelligence and turned against man.

Intriguing . . .

DISGUSTING DALEKS

TV cyborgs have been relatively plentiful if not always obviously apparent. *Dr Who*'s Daleks were really cyborgs, their rather disgusting forms – resembling animated spaghetti Bolognaise – inside the cybernetic shell. We still remember the outcry in the early Sixties when all taste was thrown to the wind in *The Evil Of The Daleks* series, where the finale was an epic of the Daleks bursting and showering everywhere. The BBC switchboard was jammed with calls . . .

The series also gave us the Autons, sinister looking cyborgs disguised as tailor's dummies. If we remember rightly they also had, in the same series, plastic daffodils which sprayed your face with poison.

One of the most memorable, and recurrent, foes of *The Avengers* were the Cybernauts, who appeared in at least three episodes, including the revived *New Avengers*, while on the side of the good guys were Lee Majors and Lindsay Wagner as *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Woman*. Available on video are the original TV pilot for *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Return Of The Six Million Dollar Man And The Bionic Woman* **(CIC Video)**, the title of which says it all. The end of this sees Steve Austin's son in his dad's heroic mould after being mangled in a car crash and bionically patched up. So far the series has not been taken up in the US.

Even the martial arts genre has given us an offering with *Bionic Ninja* **(VPD)**.



DR WHO

ANDROID TOO

Androids have generally had a lower profile in the cinema, although theoretically they are much simpler to portray. No complicated make ups – just say in the script that the guy is an android and the audience will believe you.

A naive switch of character came in

the *Alien/Aliens* pairing **(CBS/Fox Video)**. In the original, Ian Holm was Ash, the member of the spaceship crew who was a little different from the others. When Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) discovers that Ash's purpose is to ensure that the Nostromo picks up the Alien of the title, she's nearly killed for her pains. Yaphet Kotto saves the day by beaning Ash with a fire extinguisher taking his head off and revealing him as a droid.

Come the return bout, 57 years later in *Aliens*, Ripley is perturbed to find out that Bishop (Lance Hendriksen) is also an android, although he prefers to call himself an 'artificial human'. By the rousing finale, Bishop is the hero of the day. Hendriksen gives a very good performance, in a very subtle, almost doll-like make-up, and with a touching sense of near innocence. A very delicate performance in a situation in which acting was secondary to the frights and tension.

Another interesting characterisation came from Don Opper as Max 404, the title character of Aaron Lipstadt's *Android* **(AFE Video)**, a fascinatingly clever independent production featuring Klaus Kinski in one of his most controlled performances as a robotic scientist working on creating a female android. Max 404 is fascinated with the details of life on Earth, having never left Kinski's space station, and the chance to escape comes when three interstellar freighter robbers arrive on the station while on the run. Lipstadt's film is fast-spaced, good-looking and actually quite charming, with Opper's performance being memorable. Interestingly Opper, who co-wrote the movie, isn't credited on the cast list. Max 404 is designated as being played by 'Himself'.

MAKING A MAN

Androids were the potential source of amusement in Michael Crichton's *Westworld* **(MGM/UA)**, where androids took over from Redcoats as the entertainers at the Theme Park of the future. Choose from Roman World, Medieval World or Western World. Everything seems fine to vacationeers James Brolin and Richard Benjamin, but when a malfunction sets the robots against the humans – especially in the form of android Wild West gunman Yul Brynner, slyly sending up his *Magnificent Seven* role – the action starts.

A sequel, *Future World* **(Video Collection)**, with Peter Fonda and Blythe Danner, was also interesting, putting forward the androids in a political takeover conspiracy headed by Arthur Hill.

In the classic SF movie, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, the mad scientist Rotwang makes an android who will lead the masses against their masters. Interestingly the movie is available in two versions – the original 1926 print on **Thorn EMI**, accompanied by a piano score, or on **Vestron** disco composer Georgio Moroder's adaptation, incorporating a lot of footage previously believed lost and with a new soundtrack including songs from Bonnie Tyler, Freddie Mercury and Jon Anderson.


INNERSPACE

To be released later in the year is *Making Mr Right*, directed by Susan Siedlemann (*Smithereens*, *Desperately Seeking Susan*), a romantic comedy in which scientist Anne Magnuson creates an android for a space flight. Inevitably she falls for him, and ends up with an awkward choice. Complete the mission and send him into space, or make him a permanent lover?

. . . studio interference, including recutting and the addition of a limp voice-over, undermined Blade Runner.

The Mr Right of the title is played by John Malkovich, the quirky actor from *Eleni*, *The Killing Fields* and *Empire Of The Sun*, and whose performance has garnered a lot of praise. We should see it around June.

Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* **(Warner Home Video)** brings us a whole new sub-division – Replicants. These are seemingly organic psuedo-humans whose existence can only be detected by intricate psychological tests. Shedding the clean-cut image, Harrison Ford played Rick Deckard, a Chandleresque private eye on the trail of some escaped Replicants, including Daryl Hannah and Joanna Cassidy and led by Rutger Hauer (from *Ladyhawke* and *Wanted – Dead Or Alive*). The style and visual impact of the film was superb, aided by a strong Vangelis score, but studio interference, including major recutting and the addition of a limp voice-over, undermined the effect of the movie.

Androids are few on the cathode tube, the only notable example being the android butler in the kid's series *Luna*, whose eccentric speech patterns were amusing.

Totally forgettable was the mercifully short-lived US TV series *Holmes And Yoyo*, taking the basic concept of Isaac Asimov's *The Caves Of Steel* by having a human cop paired with an android.

It was meant to be a comedy . . .
It was grim . . .

PROSTHETICS

There seems to be one indespensible prosthetic used when the scriptwriters on a production either run out of ideas or want to make their baddie even badder – the multi-purpose and very deadly false hand.

Joseph Wiseman as *Dr No* **(Warner Home Video)** merely had two solid black ones, handy for hitting people, but James Bond's adversary eight years later in *Live And Let Die* **(Warner Home Video)** had a large, stabbing mechanical claw. Tee Hee, played by Julius Harris, was a baddie played with manic glee and a terrible taste in suits.

Roman Geer in the aforementioned *2019* also had a claw, useful for putting out eyes, while Chuck Conners in *99 And 44/100% Dead* **(CBS/Fox Video)** – unsurprisingly also known under the less cumbersome title *Call Harry Crown* – was Claw Zuckerman, with an appendage onto which many attachments could fit, including a corkscrew, a cleaver and, for those intimate evenings at home, a cat o'nine tails.

Director John Landis took this idea to its zany conclusion with his Oriental megalomaniac in *Kentucky Fried Movie* **(Replay Video)**. Based on the similarly-equipped Han in Bruce Lee's *Enter The Dragon* **(Warner Home Video)**, Landis's despot has a vibrator nad electric toothbrush attachment for his false hand, a joke ripped-off for Joe Dante's current *Innerspace*.

A bionic arm was one kid's weaponry in Joe D'Amato's *Mad Max* rip-off *Exterminators Of The Year 3000* **(Medusa)**, very handy for lobbing rocks at the speed of sound.

But the last word belongs to Charles Band, whose Infinity Pictures arm makes even lower budget movies than either Empire or Wizard. In *Maximum Thrust* (unseen in this country and unlikely to be so either), the hero is a spy who has weapons built directly into him – gun barrels and rockets built into his fingers, toes, elbows, etc. Consequently, when he is ambushed by a horde of bad guys in the gents, we suddenly find out where they put the machine gun . . .

ANY PORSCHE IN A STORM



TWO RADIO-CONTROLLED PORSCHES TO WIN!

Plus 25 copies of TEST DRIVE from Electronic Arts

Fancy yourself behind the wheel of a Porsche? Who doesn't?

Suitably inspired by **Electronic Arts**'s posh car driving simulator *Test Drive* (the review's on page 42), we are offering as a purring first prize in this cruising competition a Porsche 911 Turbo. Sadly neither Electronic Arts nor THE GAMES MACHINE (even combined!) could actually afford a real Porsche to give away, so we got the very next best thing . . . well, not quite; the VERY next best thing would probably be a Lotus Esprit or an Aston Martin DB6. But, though it is a little smaller and not perhaps quite as fast as the real thing, it is nevertheless a Porsche – a radio-controlled model which lets you do nearly everything the real car will except sit in it. Oh, and it isn't a German Porsche, this one's from Japan.

From the neat radio remote unit you can control the car in two forward speeds and one reverse. The headlamps operate, and in turbo-mode the roof flips up to reveal flashing red lights and a police siren sounds.

And it doesn't end there. For a second prize there's another radio-controlled, silver replica of a Porsche 959 with working headlamps. We couldn't photograph it because before the session, it turned left at the junction and hasn't been seen since. We will get it back in time though!

To each of the 25 runners up **Electronic Arts** are giving away a copy *Test Drive*. Check out the list of formats *Test Drive* is available for and let us know the make of your computer. To have a chance of winning these great prizes you must correctly answer the seven motoring questions set out below. Send your entry complete with your name, address and computer (state disk or cassette where applicable) on a postcard or sealed down envelope to: **PORSCHE COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than February 18. First correct answers drawn win, and our standard competition rules apply – if you are in any doubt, check out the details in the masthead.

TEST DRIVE **is available for**
AMIGA
CBM 64/128
Cassette and Disk)
ATARI ST
PC

1) In what make of car was Mrs James Bond killed?
2) What was the name of the famous vintage car which successfully finished the London to Brighton run thanks to Kenneth Moore and Co?
3) In what make of car was the gold stolen via the sewage system in the film *Italian Job*?
4) Who won the 1987 RAC rally?
5) What was the name of the very special car that Mike Mercury used to pilot?
6) On a car, what do the letters **GT** stand for?
7) On some makes of car, what does the name **Ghia** come from?



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HOW TAPELESS CAN YOU GET?

Following last issue's Fairlight thrills, Jon Bates comes down to earth to look at some cheaper options in the quest for the Tapeless Studio, and examines how far along the road you can go to kick the magnetic tape habit.

If you're semi-serious about setting up a studio at home or an area where you can mess around with music if you like, it would be to your advantage to know where to start. This is not a Best Buy guide but a plethora of hopefully useful advice, much of it gained by having gone through the hoop of acquiring equipment and software to set up two such places, one at home and the other at a local college. The last issue considered the multo expensivo Fairlight. Not as a buyers' guide but as an example of state-of-the-art. But as we are not about to shell out for one, on with the business of the humble home studio.

You don't have to have a degree in acoustic physics to know that if you copy tapes the sound degenerates just a little bit. It can be likened to recopying photocopies. The more you do it, the worse the quality becomes, until the result is a rather splintered and faded image of the original. And until the introduction of sensibly priced digital home recording (RDat or whatever), that is where things must sadly remain.

So where does that leave us? Follow the sound chain backwards from sound that has ended up on an ordinary stereo cassette: before that it may have been on a four-track cassette machine, maybe a reel-to-reel two-track machine or even the luxury of a greater number of multi-tracks; but where was it before that? The most likely option, if you are using a four-track machine, is that you bounced tracks together on the machine to give you more room . . . and inevitably suffered a lack of final control over each instrument and a drop in the quality. There are several options left open for us. Each involves a little bit of investment but there again you don't get anything for nowt.

FLAVOUR OF THE DECADE

First a preface about the actual bits that create the sound, then onto how we can control and record it.

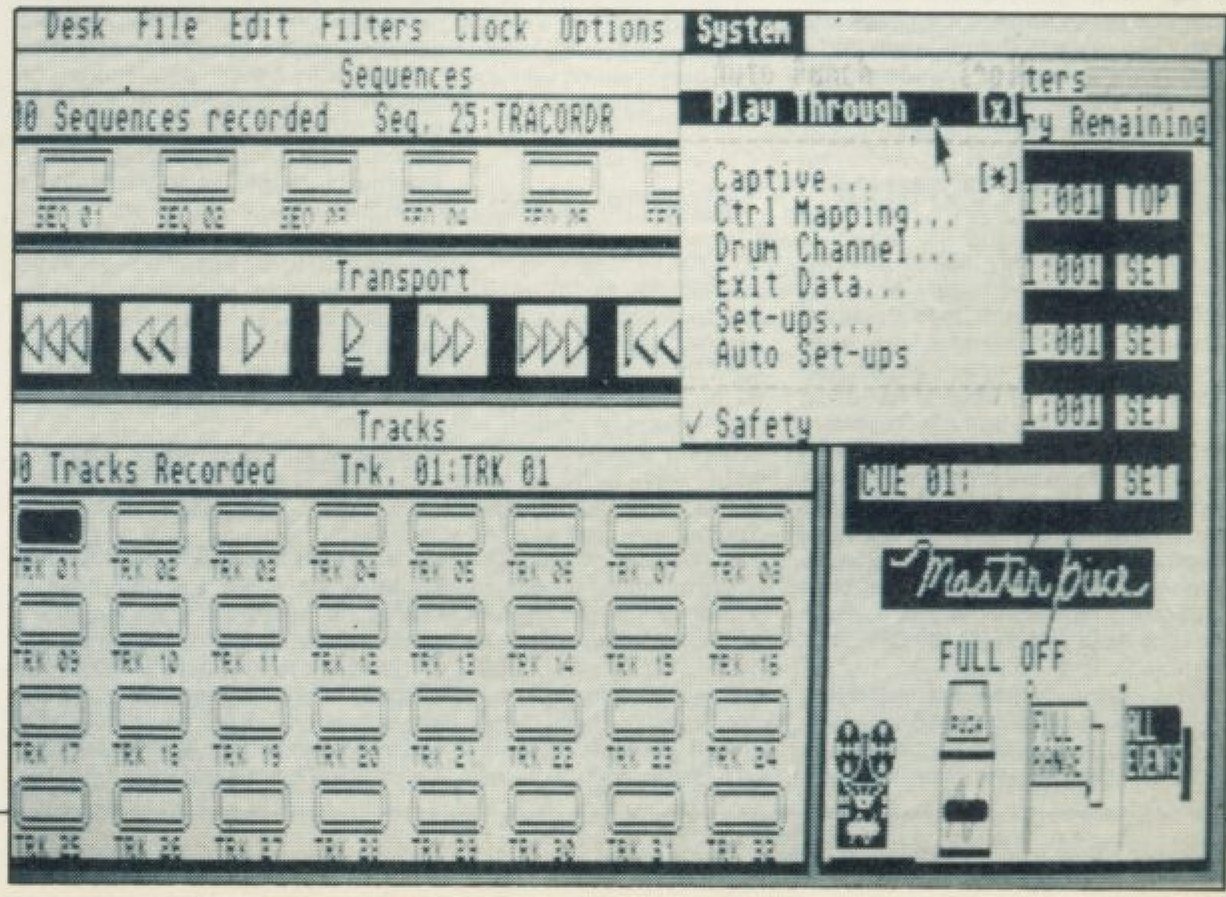
The basic dilemma is the recording machine itself. Any copying process degenerates the quality so long as it is made in analog – electrical/magnetic impulses. Enter MIDI, very quickly. MIDI is a universal standard that allows music information to be transmitted digitally between different instruments and processors so long as they all are equipped with a MIDI port. Thus keyboard A can hook up to keyboard B and not only access sounds but also sustain, volume and other peripherals, and change the voice programs in parallel with the first keyboard. New additions to the very open areas of the language appear on a regular basis, and consequently it is *the* thing – flavour of the musical decade. There are articles galore on MIDI in other specialist magazines and so I don't propose to go into it in great depth here. If you knew all that before, please carry on reading now. Okay, Good.

One of the boons of MIDI is that you can update equipment without having to trade in.

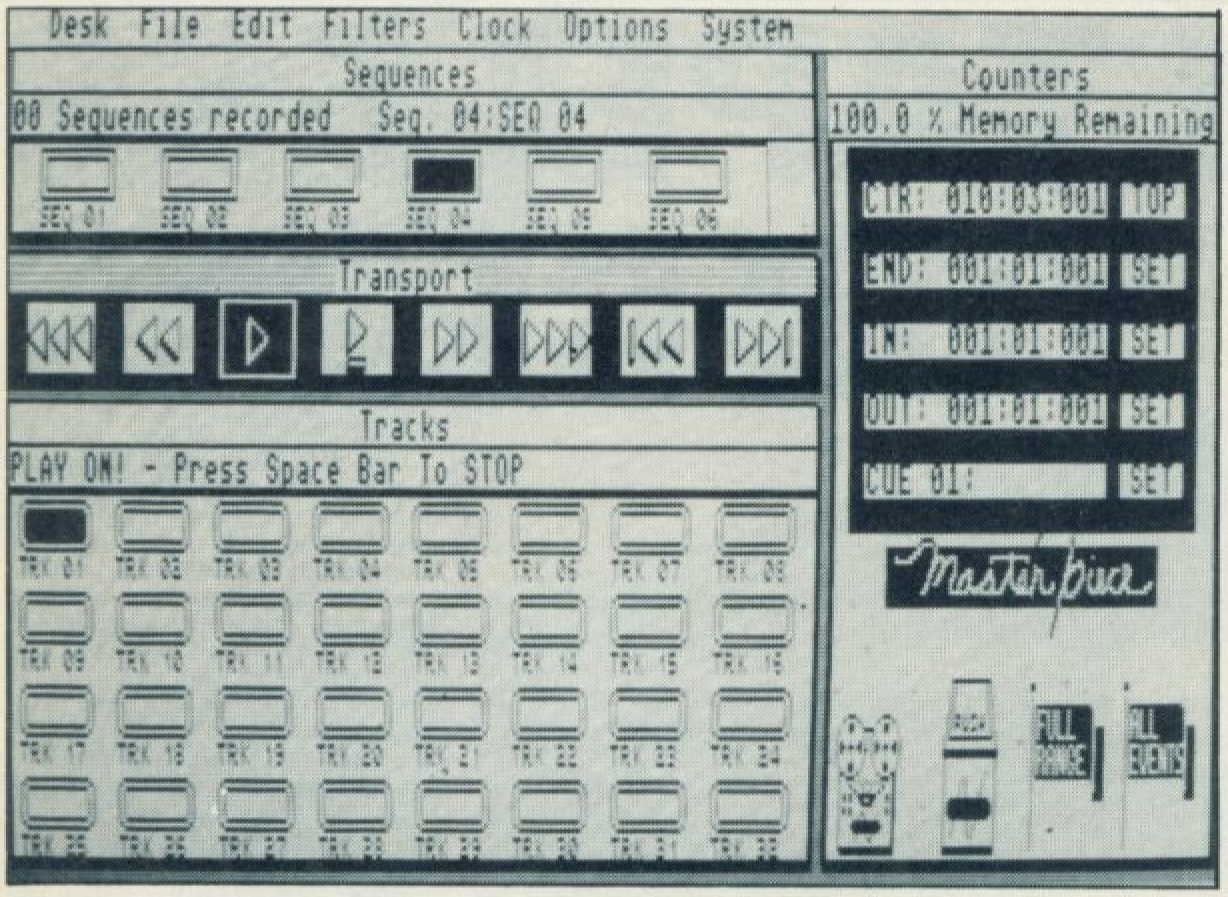
One of the boons of MIDI is that you can update equipment without having to trade in. Imagine a world where all micros had the same common language and you will see why it is so useful. You retain your original instrument and purchase another to go with it. Or more to the point, you purchase a port with another set of voices, as you won't need two keyboards unless you are really greedy. MIDI can receive and send on up to 16 separate channels. In theory this means you can hook up 16 individual instruments and control them from some sort of central service. In practice this is a lot of expense! In terms of our tapeless, cost-conscious studio we would do better shopping around for a tone module that will work on two or more channels simultaneously with a different sound for each.

LOW TO MIDI COST

From the correspondence I've had it seems that many of you have spotted that the humble **Casio CZ101** is a device worth investigating. A rather weedy looking synth with only mini-keys and a lousy set of factory voices, it has been around for nearly three years. But it will receive on four separate channels at once, although only sonophonically – one note at a time – and it has a lot of sonic capabilities. From this you can generate four separate music lines, each with a different tone. Shop



PRESS ANY KEY



around, they are available second-hand.

The next stage up is the £300 to £500 bracket, which includes Yamaha tone modules and one from Roland. Eight simultaneous channels, performance set-ups and lots more sounds. The Roland, by the way, has on it percussion voices which may save you purchasing a drum machine. And while we are talking about things like this, it is worth bearing in mind that several of the upmarket single keyboards can be persuaded to act as multi-channel tone-modules – drums and all – with variable control over the voices and channels individually. Technics have always been good at this, and the **Yamaha PSR 70** is a very good example of an instrument that will do far more than its appearance would suggest. If you get one of the latter, write away for the special MIDI guide to the PSR from Yamaha – they neglected to pack one into the original documentation and it is quite an eye-opener. Whatever you choose, the more channels it will respond to the merrier.

KEEP THE SPECTRUM

Even if you have only taken a passing interest in the music side of computing it cannot have escaped your notice that there have been a fair few programs and associated hardware with the MIDI acronym to the fore. From the humble Spectrum through to the more powerful 16-bit machines, there are programs that will record and playback MIDI data, edit it, and generally sequence blocks of musical data to form song patterns. The input is usually from a MIDI keyboard, although there are some that will input data from the QWERTY keys.

If you own a Spectrum and are thinking of upgrading to a 16-bit, don't throw the Spectrum away, because there are several sequence and edit programs that can be MIDI'd up with a more powerful big brother program to give you even greater power. By combining your existing set-up with the new, thanks to a common language, you can expand and update, not only with sound capabilities but also with controlling possibilities, at a far lower cost than totally upgrading the system by throwing it away and starting all over again. The more information you can confine to MIDI the more tapeless your home studio will be.

I give Masterpiece a thumbs-up as a real-time recorder and manipulator of data.

It will probably be the case that you will be able to record and sequence on more MIDI channels than you have available on modules. This means more expense in buying another module, or pooling resources with friend, or you can go for the third option which is to have a four-track that can take a sync track. A sync track lets you put a synchronisation pulse onto one track whilst you record some of your sequences. You then record the other sequences on another track, but driven by the code pulled off the sync track – most decent sequencers respond to an external clock (MIDI also transmits its own clock pulses). However to do this you will need a device that converts MIDI pulses to tape sync pulse – there are various ones about marketed by Yamaha and XRI systems, to name but two. Using a sync track does reduce you down to three tracks of sound but there are advantages.

THREE TRACKS AND SYNC

Let's take an example to see how this could work. The equipment is a CZ101, a computer sequencer, a sync-to-tape box, drum machine and a four-track tape machine. First, you can record four separate lines on the sequencer and check these. Next, set up an additional four lines (remember they can all have different sounds) on the next four tracks of the sequencer. By using control codes and program change numbers, you can flip between your first and second set of four lines and compare. By careful manipulation of the relative volumes, either by MIDI control or by altering the actual voices used on the synth, you can achieve an astonishing level of smooth sound. One set of four is recorded on one track. Then you set the sequencer to work to an external clock, and let the tape sync track govern the speed so that the second set of four voices is perfectly synchronised and recorded on a separate track. Depending on the sequencer, you could either have a completely separate drum track or set the drum machine to chain its own (or your) patterns.

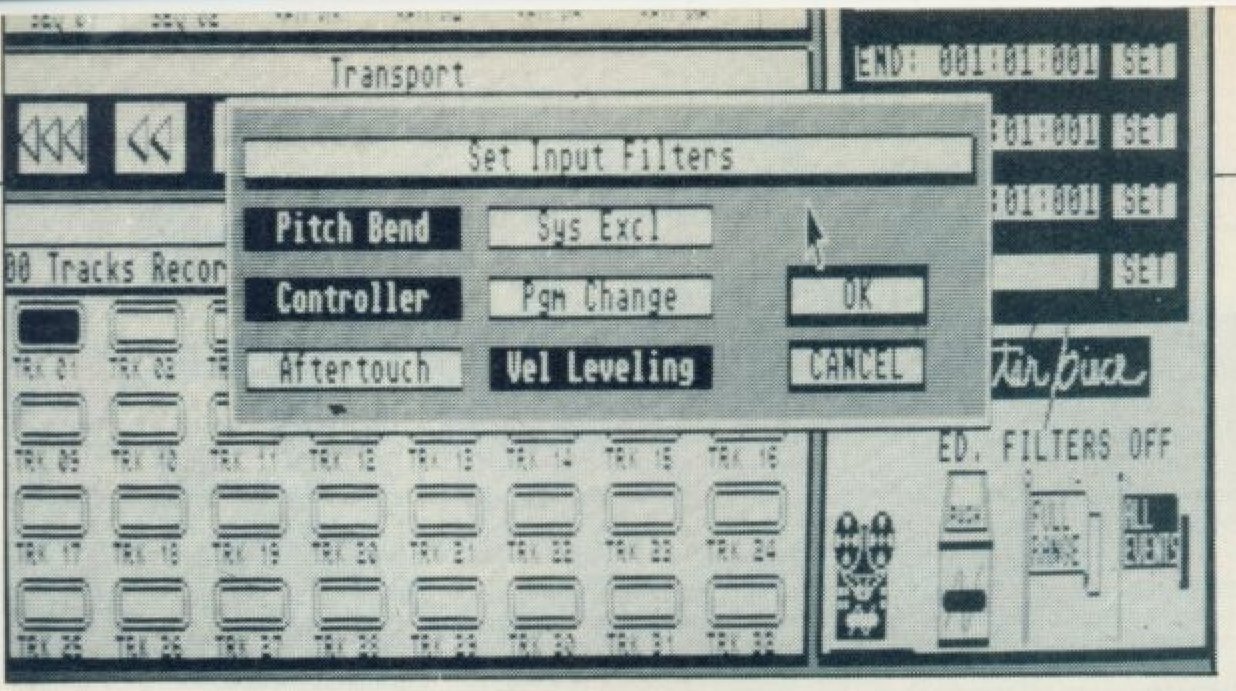
Three separate recorded tracks so far, and eight lines of music plus drums all individually controlled. As a final touch you can wipe the sync track and add some chords as fillers, or maybe an acoustic instrument. Mix down on to stereo cassette, and you have a final recording that has had control over every line played, and the facility to alter each one. More to the point, only one tape copy has been involved so there is going to be very little loss of quality.

ATARI ST SOFTWARE

A decent sequencer gives you lots of control over MIDI peripherals, and should let you chain phrases together, edit out bum notes, and should be generally easy to use. It doesn't take a lot to work out that the Atari 520/1040 ST has more music software available for it than any other 16-bit, due mainly to its built-in MIDI ports. Inevitably there will be more programs reviewed for this machine than any other at present. The following three are representative of real-time sequencers available, two from the lower price range and one from the mid- to upper-price range.

SuperConductor from Microdeal is a £49.95 package that lets you record sequences, name them and assemble them visually into song type formats – assembling them on 16 tracks running horizontally across the screen. Blocks can be copied and ordered anywhere. Individual tracks can be turned off or on and the MIDI channel it puts out on specified. To edit notes (as is often the case with real-time sequencers) is a laborious process whereby the screen flips to a list of the MIDI data stream and you have to do some head scratching to work out which note is which, as well as which code does what.

SuperConductor can also control the woefully inadequate internal chip. (Why bother! – unless you haven't got a MIDI keyboard and want to play the Demo tunes, in which case why buy the program, as you can't enter notes other than via MIDI?). Recording is very simple: choose your tempo, click on record and it gives you a four-beat count-in. Having finished, you name the block/sequence and place it anywhere on any track. Blocks can be copied, split, mixed and merged – this is very useful for putting a control track on separately, say for pitch bend and program change, and then, when



perfected, merging it with the note track. Blocks can also be transposed, codes referring to aftertouch filtered out, and quantized, rounding up your rotten arhythmic playing to something that sounds in time.

There are a few reservations though. It asks you to define the block length before you start, which is sometimes rather difficult, especially as it demands that you tell it by the number of beats. It automatically strips off the channel code, so that in effect it records in what is known as Omni mode. Okay for single-channel instruments, but not so good for transferring from other sequencers and multi-channel instruments: ie the single keyboards referred to previously. Moreover it will not respond to an external clock pulse, so any slave options are well and truly scuppered. But it does use the sophisticated Song Position Pointer, so that if you want to start recording half way through a song, some drum machines can work out how far you are through the song and jump ahead accordingly to the correct point – very clever, but not found on the low-budget products that you might associate with the market for a low-budget sequencer.

The MIDI send commands are quite good and let you kill notes that hang on – why they should have included a system reset and MIDI tuning function I'm not sure – they are very rarely used except on the most upmarket of packages that control myriads of synths at once. Perhaps these would have been worth sacrificing, along with the internal voice and song position option, in favour of a little more practical flexibility for the home user – a bit like equipping a 2CV with anti-lock brakes but at the expense of a heater!

What I was very impressed with was the Systems Exclusive code writing part. This is really useful for talking to your synth in its own language and getting it to stand on its end. You will have to pillage the owner's manual, or pester the manufacturers for info, but it does give access to functions that are usually unavailable to the average user. There are very few packages that have this function – one not as hard as that to include – and it certainly makes up for some of the package's oddities. It is well documented and comes with the full spec of MIDI protocol.

. . . the Systems Exclusive code is really useful for talking to your synth in its own language and getting it to stand on its end.

If you own a Spectrum and are thinking of upgrading to a 16-bit, don't throw the Spectrum away . . .

SINGING ALONG

Add an extra tenner to your purchasing power and you can have the *EZ-Track* sequencer from Hybrid Arts. This will play back up to 20 tracks, each track being a song. Like many sequencers it emulates the controls of a tape recorder. All operations take place on the one screen which is split down the centre: track display and control to the left, recording and playback control to the right. All other facilities are pulled down. Looking at the track control on the left you have track number, name, arrow, on/off, end of track maker, defined MIDI channel and whether or not it is write/record protected and how much memory it has used up. When a track is playing a set of symbols flash, showing you how many notes are playing at any one time, and a protect marker. All very straightforward.

The right-half of the screen shows the record/play, stop and pause buttons, tempo can be altered and the song transposed. There is also a metronome to keep timing reasonable. MIDI **in** can be routed **Thru** to the **out** port if you are using sounds from another module. Quantizing is pulled down and displayed in notes rather than numbers. To correct tracks like this you copy from one to another and thus retain the original. It will work on either internal or external clock pulses and recording is a very easy process. There is step-time option but it is very slow. Editing is where this program falls down as there isn't any, but there is the promise of an editing update. Certainly it is a very painless and easy introduction to sequencing.

QUANTIZING POWER

Masterpiece from Sonus is a much bigger and more comprehensive program, dongle protected; without the dongle it runs in demo mode only. It records and plays back on 32 MIDI tracks. Up to 24 sequences can be recorded and chained together.

Where it scores over the previous two programs is that you have complete manipulation and control over every feature that you record. You can jump to cue point in the sequence and record by punching in at predetermined points. All tracks and sequencers can be named. The clock facilities are much more thoughtful – you can choose internal or external, whether or not it will start from your first note or not, wait for the start byte from a drum machine, specify intro count etc, etc.

Tracks can be copied by dragging the track icon to the track you wish to copy to. Tracks can also be appended to others, transposed, and quantized. As you might expect, the latter two options are very comprehensive. You can transpose just a single note, a defined set of notes, or the whole track. Quantize will also allow a tolerance range so that a degree of 'feel' is possible. There is an offset for time values so that you can offset for, say, the slow attack of a synth perhaps, or if you want a specific drum to 'lean' on or off the beat. You can alter volumes gradually or suddenly and edit the velocity sensitivity. A whole track can be shifted backwards or forwards in time. Any track can be sent on up to four MIDI channels and you can run two sets of 16 channels (hence a 32-track recorder) if you purchase the optional hardware that splits between MIDI A and MIDI B outputs (it uses the modem port). These are all playback features that don't alter the original recording unless a 'harder' option is selected. There is full MIDI filtering and control, and the reset features are definable so that certain parameters can be reset at any given point. There is also a Mapping control that will turn any control parameter into another, so that pitch bend could become a pan control (if you have stereo module that is).

Step-time is not well catered for though, but really this is more of an afterthought than a main feature. Editing is a bit of a pain as you have to store your file and boot up another edit disk; this is no doubt because of the large area that the main program uses. Editing itself is reasonable: you can search for specific events, playback the displayed section and edit any of the displayed notes and parameters by clicking on them.

I haven't covered *Masterpiece* in mega-depth as it is a very comprehensive program and one which could take an awful lot of space to describe in full. Personally I give it a fairly large thumbs-up as a real-time recorder and manipulator of data. It is designed on professional standards and as such, at a mere touch under £200, the price reflects this. The extra MIDI port is another £50. It will also import and export data to Sonus's *SuperScore* score writer which is due for review in a later issue.

For all three programs I used the same test: interfacing it with a Casio CZ, and also a Yamaha CX5 Music Computer with a large and complex progam on it which I wanted to edit in full. The Sonus *Masterpiece* would fit the bill for the latter, but *SuperConductor* gives systems exclusive control, and the *EZ-track* is a very fast and watertight storage and playback program.

Next month Jon continues on the sequencing front plus a look at other music utilities, and offers help and info. If you have any ideas or queries send them to Jon Bates, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*. **Jon cannot guarantee a personal reply but the most useful and usual queries will get answered in these pages.**

UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

Fresh from tramping the streets in search of stereotypical computer industry figures desperate for press coverage in his famous TGM columns, Mel Croucher has some more tricky questions for you. If you can get more than 17 questions out of 20 right, consider yourself a Person Renowned In Computer Knowledge . . .

1) Where would you find an AZERTY keyboard?

2) Which of the following fruits is not a computer: Apricot, Apple, Acorn, Peach, Prune?

3) In the classic science-fiction film *The Day The Earth Stood Still* what were the only words that could stop the robot from destroying the world?

4) Which software houses can be found in the following insults: DIRER FIB, SLUG DO, TOSSER C DAME, RICE TRAM SNOT?

5) In 1702 a 3-D clockwork computer was invented to predict planetary movements. What was it called?

6) In the movie *Demon Seed*, what did the computer do to Julie Christie?

7) Amstrad wordy process advertymold geriatric sillisodde's namey?

8) Edgar Varese invented the sound sampler in 1916. True or false?

9) In 1980 the theme from *The Invaders*, called *Computer Game* was a Top 20 hit. Name the band.

10) What have the following got in common: Rin Tin Tin, Lassie, the Spectrum+3?

11) What was the name of the Paranoid Android in *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy*?

12) Fill in the missing words:
'- - - - - - BIKE'
'YOGI - - - -'
'- - - - - POINT'
'FREDDY - - - - - - -'

13) The word 'computer' comes from the Latin 'computo'. What does it mean?

14) If it takes seven men two years to program *Star Trek*, how long does it take me to review it?

15) What company manufactures the intelligence chips for both the Speak'n'Spell machine and the Tomahawk Cruise Missile?

16) Which of the following is a real software house: Thalamus, The Ram Jam Corporation, Andrex?



17) Who is this madwoman? **(a)** Marianne Scarlet of St.Brides, **(b)** David Ward at the Ocean Christmas panto, **(c)** Nanny Barnes about to take Prince William 'in hand'.

18) What do you get when you cross a giant piano with Mel Croucher's trousers?



19) Which computer named after a zodiac sign failed to herald the dawning of a New Age?

20) Which cities are associated with the following: *Tau Ceti*, *Judge Death*, *Batman*, *Barbarian*

ANSWERS

1) Pleurged ento a Franch cermpeuteur
2) The Prune: he's the guy who programs them
3) 'Gort klatu berrada nikto!'
4) Firebird, US Gold, Code Masters, Mastertronic
5) The Orrery: named after its inventor the Earl of Orrery.
6) It mated with her
7) Professor Stanley Unwin
8) True: he used non-orchestral sounds stored on 78rpm audio discs.
9) Yellow Magic Orchestra
10) They are all dogs
11) Marvin
12) EXCITE, BEAR, FLASH, HARDEST
13) To reckon or to calculate
14) Four letters
15) Texas Instruments
16) Andrex: it's very soft
17) (a) Marianne Scarlet about to take Prince William in hand at the Ocean Christmas panto
18) The Great Dictator
19) Aquarius
20) Centralis, Megacity, Gotham City, Bristol

NEXT MONTH

A GAMES MACHINE EXCLUSIVE!

ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME

For almost four years the name of Ultimate (Play The Game) stood for the very best of home computer games. The company had an unbroken string of 14 hit Spectrum games and several for the Commodore 64. Sales topped the quarter million on some titles, and with *Knight Lore*, Ultimate virtually invented the forced perspective 3-D arcade adventure.

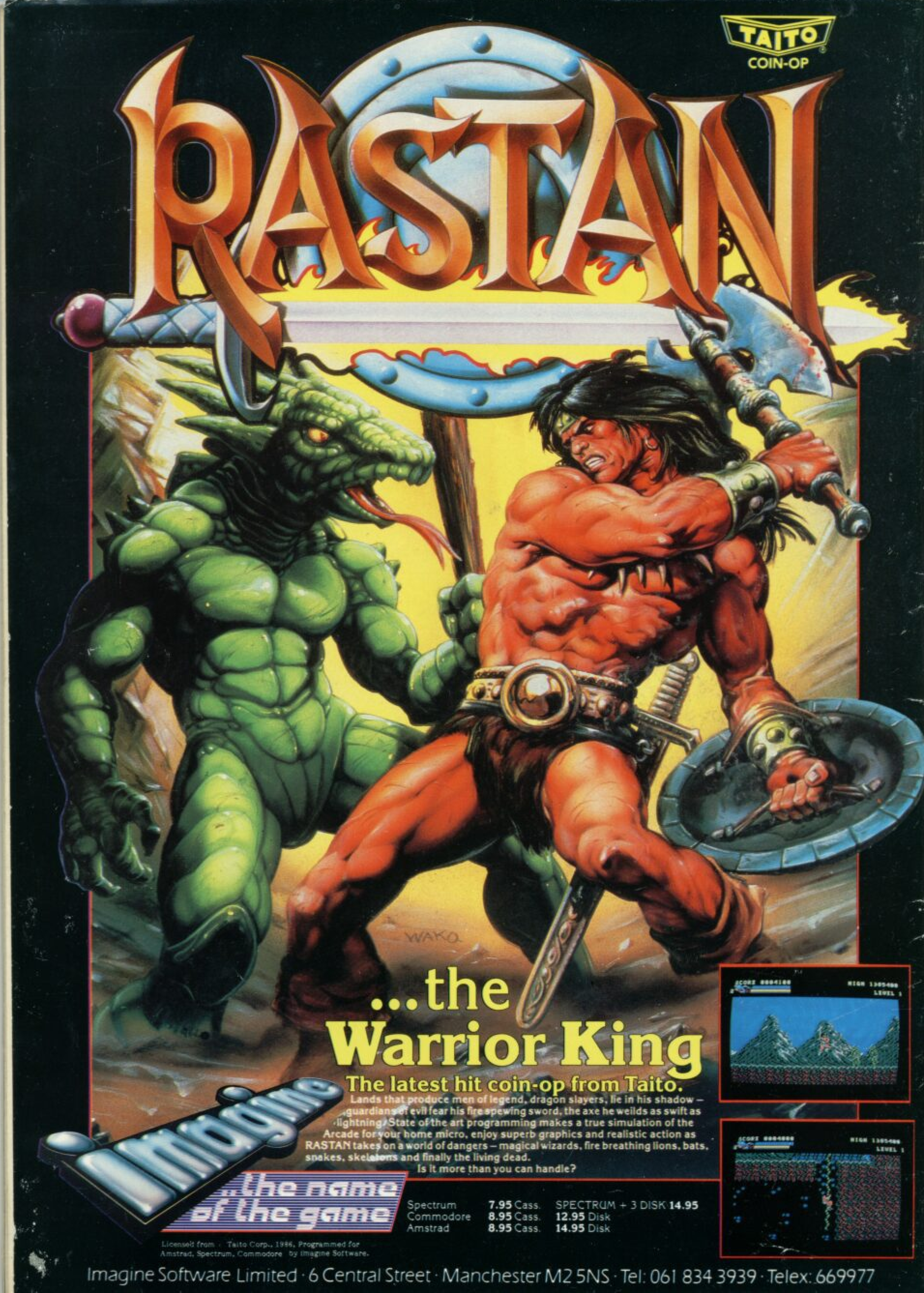
Despite Ultimate's renown, very little was ever known about the company. They rebuffed reporters and shunned publicity. No proper interview was ever conducted.

And then Ultimate simply faded from the scene and so did the people behind it. But they are about to emerge once again as a new and powerful force in British software, and they chose to talk exclusively to THE GAMES MACHINE about their past and their resurrection.

Now you can read the startling true inside Ultimate story in next month's packed issue of THE GAMES MACHINE, and find out just what it is they are doing.

- We go on the Bulletin 1000 trail, and talk to the people who help sell games into the chainstores.
- Mel Croucher talks to well-known programmers about how the industry ripped them off – a form of software Child Abuse. And as a complete change he looks at home video recording on a budget.
- Jon Bates gets to grips with the finer points of MIDI.
- PLUS the latest multi-format games reviews, previews, board games, fantasy games and adventures.
- Don't miss out, the next issue of THE GAMES MACHINE goes on sale from February 18 at all good newsagents etc.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX


TAITO
COIN-OP
RASTAN
WAKO
...the
Warrior King
The latest hit coin-op from Taito.
Lands that produce men of legend, dragon slayers, lie in his shadow – guardians of evil fear his fire spewing sword, the axe he weilds as swift as lightning. State of the art programming makes a true simulation of the Arcade for your home micro, enjoy superb graphics and realistic action as RASTAN takes on a world of dangers – magical wizards, fire breathing lions, bats, snakes, skeletons and finally the living dead.
Is it more than you can handle?
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...the name of the game
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